# BHAGAVAD GITA FOR PEACE OF MIND

R.J. VENKATESWARAN

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY- 400 007

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# BHAGAVAD GITA FOR PEACE OF MIND

*By*

R. J. VENKATESWARAN

1982

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
Kulapati Munshi Marg
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# PREFACE

Numerous books have been published on the Bhagavad Gita by way of translations and commentaries. In the present century alone, nearly a hundred books have been published and, among the authors, there have been many distinguished leaders of our freedom movement like Dr. Annie Besant, B. G. Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, C. Rajagopalachari, K. M. Munshi and Morarji Desai. Outstanding scholars and philosophers, including Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, have also produced illuminating commentaries on the Gita. Even so, I felt that there was need for another book which would explain the message of the Gita in a language easily understood by those who are not familiar with the religious and philosophical background. In this book, therefore, I have focussed attention on those teachings of Sri Krishna, which have a direct and intimate bearing on our mental peace.

Peace of mind is deeply disturbed by such emotions as anger, anxiety, resentment, and hatred of others and by fear of death. There are numerous verses in the Gita, in which the Lord advises us to eschew such destructive thoughts and to cultivate a positive outlook on life. These aspects deserve far greater emphasis than what has been given in the existing books. Some translators and commentators have also not correctly interpreted the Gita's message.

For instance, it is said that the Lord wants us to abandon all desires in order to achieve mental peace. But, in fact, His exhortation is to shun only those desires which are of a selfish nature. On the other hand, as I have explained, desire can be a powerful motivating factor which can help to lead a life of happiness and prosperity both in the material and spiritual sense. The practice of sharing one's wealth can greatly contribute to the achievement of

peace of mind. This aspect has also not been given due importance in the existing books.

The teachings of the Gita help us to achieve not only inner calm but also unlimited energy. Moderation in eating, sleeping and recreation as well as the practice of meditation and prayer will bring about the harmonious working of mind and body, producing dynamic energy. This is another aspect of the teachings of the Gita, which I have highlighted.

All over the world, men and women have been trying various methods to avoid the stress and strain of modern life and attain peace of mind. As I was completing this book, I came across a report by Reuter's news agency about the discovery of a "miracle pill' which can virtually wipe out depression, anxiety, and sleep problems. The report said that this was not a drug but totally a natural substance with no side-effects. The renowned stress expert and neuro-surgeon, Dr. Norman Shealy, has claimed that this pill is "terrific" and that it will help people to throw away their tranquillisers, sleeping pills and anti-depressant drugs for all time. But whatever may be the miraculous effects claimed for such discoveries, can they produce the desired impact so long as man does not know how to control and regulate his thoughts and he allows them to be influenced by harmful emotions?

The formulas for mental peace, contained in the Gita, are as valid and effective today as they were when Lord Krishna delivered it. Dr. Annie Besant wrote in 1904: "Since it fell from the divine lips of Shri Krishna on the field of battle, and stilled the surging emotions of his disciple and friend, how many weary souls has it led to Him, how many troubled hearts has it quieted and strengthened."

There is no doubt that, for centuries to come, the Gita will continue to inspire, instruct and illuminate the people on how they can help themselves by their own

efforts to lead a life full of energy and enthusiasm, peace and prosperity. I trust that this book will be of practical help to readers in having a better understanding of the teachings of the Song of God.

I am indebted to the scholars and savants, Indian and foreign, from whose writings I have quoted to support and strengthen my interpretation of the Gita.

*Calcutta*

*10th January, 1982* R. J. VENKATESWARAN

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# 1

## PEACE OF MIND — WHAT DOES IT MEAN ?

Of all things desired by man, peace of mind is the most important. Neither health nor wealth, neither fame nor status can be a substitute for this most valuable asset. Many people are apparently in good health, yet they feel miserable because their mind is not at peace. A man may accumulate an immense fortune but, in the absence of mental peace, he cannot enjoy it. Several countries have been able to achieve remarkable material prosperity. Their citizens have all the comforts and amenities of modern civilisation. But not many of them have succeeded in obtaining the kind of mental peace which alone can help man to realise his full personality.

President Roosevelt promised his people the famous four freedoms during the second world war. These were freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear. Americans have secured the first three freedoms but the last one—freedom from fear—is still a distant goal. Citizens are in constant fear of fellow citizens, the crime rate in New York being one of the highest in the world. More than 50 per cent of the people in the USA are said to be accustomed to taking sleeping pills and tranquillisers and yet find difficulty in avoiding severe strain and stress. In many other countries also, whether they belong to the developed or the developing world, and whether they are under a democracy or dictatorship, the average citizen has been trying in vain to secure permanent peace of mind. Economists and statisticians measure a country's progress in terms of the per capita consumption of goods and services. These may give us some idea of their level of living and their progress in developing their economy. But no statistics or chart can explain and illustrate to what extent the people of a country are able to achieve peace of mind in the real sense of the term.

Peace of mind broadly has two aspects—the negative and the positive. On the negative side, it involves the elimination

of fear, worry, anger, anxiety and such other emotions which sap vitality, stunt personality and disturb inner harmony. On the positive side, it means the deliberate and consistent practice of tranquillity, serenity, patience, and equanimity. It is, of course, not easy to eliminate the negative factors. Even some of the greatest and noblest men of the world have found it difficult to do so. It fact, some experts in psychology say that occasional resort to temper is good for one's mind and body. Some scientists maintain that weeping makes the eyes more beautiful.

If it is hard to avoid the negative emotions it is even harder to cultivate and practise the positive ones. Neither education nor religion nor science nor any of the arts can teach us to practise virtues like patience and tranquillity. All that we can hope for is to observe these qualities at least to some extent in our daily lives so that they can have a beneficial impact on our mind and body. In the history of the world we come across only a few instances of men and women who achieved success in securing mental peace for all time. But in the fiercely competitive world of today, for most people, engaged in the daily pursuit of making a living, the elimination of negative feelings and persistent practice of positive ones are extremely difficult. Even so, every individual has to make serious and systematic efforts in this direction in order to make his life worth living.

Peace of mind is closely related to the health of the body. The intimate relationship between mind and body is being increasingly realised by medical practitioners all over the world. According to Andre Maurois, "our minds have unbelievable power over our bodies." Chesterfield has said that "the mind and the body are married, for they are most intimately united; and when one suffers, the other sympathises." It is now recognised that no one can enjoy mental peace unless one takes care to keep his body in a reasonably good condition. A positive and cheerful frame of mind does contribute a great deal to the maintenance of good health. There have also been many instances of even obstinate and chronic diseases being cured by the magnificent power of belief and positive thinking. A healthy body depends on the eating

of nutritious and balanced food, avoidance of things that harm and irritate, and the practice of appropriate exercises.

Religion has always played an important role in helping mankind to achieve mental peace. It is true that in the past religion in many countries had been a source of discord and disunity and even wars had been fought on this issue. But religion has also been a tremendous force for promoting peace and goodwill in the world. As Horace Bushnel has said, "the noblest charities, the best fruits of learning, the richest discoveries, the best institutions of law and justice, every greatest thing the world has seen, represents, more or less directly, the fruitfulness and creativeness of religion." To what extent religion will help man to find mental peace will, of course, depend on whether he adopts the right attitude to it. As Benjamin Disraeli has observed, "religion should be the rule of life, not a casual incident in it."

It is indeed a mistake to suppose that religion and science are opposed to each other. The fact is that we need both religion and science to establish a new world order based on justice and equality. To quote C.W. Shields, "Religion, cultivated to the absolute neglect of science, would produce a reign of superstition, tyranny, and barbarism like that which covered Europe in the dark ages of the church. Science, cultivated to the utter neglect of religion, would produce a reign of infidelity, impiety, and sensuality. The two interests, united, correct and perfect each other."

In recent years, all over the world more people are beginning to realise the value of religion in promoting health and happiness. Religious books are in increasing demand and there is a growing tendency among the people to understand the real significance of religion. It is necessary to remember that although there are differences among religions, they all emphasise the fundamental truths which are common to all mankind. As Albert Einstein has said, "all religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree."

The achievement of mental peace has assumed more urgency and importance at present when in almost every country there has been a distinct improvement in the longevity

of the average citizen. Thanks to the miracles of modern medicine, the death—rate has been, and is being, drastically reduced while the length of life is being steadily enlarged. In India, for instance, the average life-expectancy has increased by 20 years since the attainment of independence. The expectation of life at birth for the quinquennium 1976-81 has been estimated at 52.6 years for a boy and 51.6 years for a girl. This compares with 32.5 years in 1946, 41.9 in 1956 and 46.4 in 1966 for men and 31.7 years in 1946, 40.6 in 1956 and 44.7 in 1966 for women. The governments in many developed countries have been providing its ageing citizens with various kinds of social security schemes. Many philanthropic organisations have come up to give assistance to old persons.

But all these efforts at the official and non-official level will not have the desired effect unless the individual has learnt how to attain peace of mind and to adjust his pattern of living to the changing circumstances. In any scheme of social security the sponsors should make it a point to impress upon the citizens the imperative need to cultivate peace of mind for, without it, they will continue to lead lives of anxiety and worry when it should be possible to avoid them to a great extent by adopting the right attitude.

## II

## GITA SHOWS THE WAY

Almost every chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* contains sound and specific suggestions for achieving peace of mind and it is up to the individual to grasp their significance and apply them with sincerity and devotion. In the first chapter, Arjuna expresses his great grief at the thought of fighting his own kinsmen. He is utterly confused and is unable to know what to do in that situation. Arjuna says that both his mind and body have become paralysed and that he envisages disaster.

He remarks : "O Krishna, on seeing my kinsmen here ready for war, my limbs quiver and my mouth dries up. My body trembles with fear and my hair stands on end. The bow Gandiva falls from my hand and my skin burns. I cannot stand steady and my mind seems to reel. I see bad omens." Arjuna adds that he does not expect any good to come from the slaughter of his kith and kin. He would rather like to be slain by the sons of Dhritarashtra and, so saying, he is plunged in deep grief and sits on the chariot after laying down his bow and arrows.

But, after listening to the discourse of Krishna, Arjuna's mind becomes quite clear and he is fully convinced of the tasks he should perform. His doubts have disappeared and he assures Krishna that he will act according to His advice. Krishna asks him, "Have you heard me with attention ? Has your ignorance been dispelled ?", and Arjuna answers, "My delusion is gone. My doubts have vanished, I now stand firm and determined. I shall act according to your advice."

The message of the Gita, rightly understood, will help to get rid of one's weaknesses, doubts and anxieties provided, of course, one believes in it with all one's heart.

There is hardly any important aspect of our daily life on which the Gita does not have something profound and practical to say. Whether it is offering worship to God,

or our approach to pleasure or pain, or our attitude to personal sorrow, one can look to the Gita for instruction and inspiration. Advice is given even on such mundane things as eating the right kind and quantity of food and the proper amount of sleep. Guidelines are also offered on how to conduct oneself in speech and action in a manner which will be consistent with dignity and conducive to mental peace. It is interesting to note the Gita's stress on the importance of philanthropy. Not many people are aware of the fact that the art of giving away one's wealth has a deep significance not only from the point of view of society but also in creating a great sense of satisfaction to the giver and in promoting peace of mind. Above all, the Gita discusses the different aspects of heaven and hell and deals with life after death.

The Gita contains many words and phrases which suggest peace, tranquillity and equanimity. Examples are *śāntim* (peace), *parām śāntim* (supreme peace), *prasādam* (tranquillity), *sukhaṁ akṣayaṁ* (undying bliss), *brahmanirvānaṁ* (bliss of God), *prasāntamanasaṁ* (supreme happiness), *yogakṣemaṁ* (security), *svargalokam viśālaṁ* (spacious world of heaven), *prasannātma* (serene-minded), and *manahprasādah* (mental happiness). Committing these to one's memory and repeating them occasionally or when the need arises, does produce a sobering effect which helps a person to avoid undesirable and harmful emotions.

Some persons have learnt all the chapters of the Gita by heart. For example, Mr. Morarji Desai began to study the Gita in 1925 and, since then, he has been a keen follower of its teachings. In his book, *A View of the Gita*, Mr. Desai has observed: "In the year 1934, I committed the whole Gita to memory with determination and went on reciting the Gita every day once or twice for several years subsequently. As I began to apply the teachings of the Gita to the questions of my life, my doubts began to get resolved. Today my faith in the teachings of the Gita is absolute and all doubts have disappeared." The fact that in his early eighties, Mr. Morarji Desai found enormous energy and enthusiasm to provide leadership to a country of over 620 million people, confronted

with problems of Himalayan proportions, provides some evidence of the immense faith that he has been able to acquire from his study and practice of the Gita.

Mr. K. M. Munshi who was a distinguished scholar and founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, has written eloquently about the impact of the Gita on his personal life. In his book, *Bhagavad Gita and Modern Life*, (published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan), Mr. Munshi says: "Often, I indulge in what I call the Gita wash. I recite it for a number of days over and over again, doing nothing else. I gorge myself with it. At the end I feel a new man. I find my mind reintegrated. Old problems assume new shapes. Weak as I am, I feel that I have gained another little grain of strength." In the subsequent chapters, we have explained how some other great men of our country have derived benefit from the Gita. Here we shall only emphasise the fact that it is for the individual to decide for himself as to how he wants to make the best use of the wisdom of the Gita.

Every one of us has to take many decisions in our daily life on various matters. Some of these decisions may be of a major nature, affecting our future career and prospects. Not many however always find it easy to take the right decision at the right time. A grasp of the fundamental teachings of the Gita does help an individual to act wisely on occasions which call for cool thinking and bold decisions. It is true that man is not infallible and it is human to err. But, as far as possible, every one should try to learn from his own experience as well as that of others and make fewer mistakes.

There is, of course, no short-cut to attain peace of mind but neither is this an impossible goal. The Gita urges man to abandon egoism, arrogance, enmity, lust and other evils. Every individual should make honest efforts in his daily life to live up to this ideal. Although it may take years and even decades to practise equanimity in the real sense of the term, the sincerity of one's attempts, and the determination with which one pursues it, are bound to have a favourable impact on one's attitude of mind.

It has been well said that attitudes are more important than facts. Benjamin Franklin, one of the most eminent philosophers of America, has observed that "the greatest discovery of my generation is that man can change his life by changing his attitude." This is certainly a profound remark but is it really a discovery of the generation to which Benjamin Franklin belonged ? Does not the Gita also say precisely the same thing ? The message of the Gita is to create in the individual a proper frame of mind which will enable him to grow to the full stature of his height. Psychologists say that most people utilise only a fraction of their intellectual, physical and spiritual potential. According to Henry Kaiser, who was one of the most dynamic citizens of America, people generally use only about 10% of their capacity. "Harness your full powers and you will be amazed at the results," said this highly successful industrialist who, even in his eighties, built colossal undertakings in his country and abroad. The Gita stresses the supreme importance of self-help and confidence. As Mr. Rohit Mehta points out in his book, *From Mind To Super-Mind: A Commentary On Bhagavad Gita,* (published by Manaktalas, Bombay): "One of the most revolutionary concepts enunciated in the Gita is that man is his own saviour. His salvation is not outside him, not in following an external authority. The Gita says, 'Let a man raise himself by himself.' "

Sincere study of the Gita and the application of its teachings in daily life do enable a person to bring into full play his latent abilities so that he can not only achieve success in the material sense but, what is certainly more important and valuable, namely, peace of mind. Merely reciting the Gita in a routine manner will not produce the desired results unless its principles are clearly understood and practised with patience and persistence. Consider, for instance, what Napoleon Hill and Harold Keown have said about the Bible in their book, *Succeed and Grow Rich Through Persuasion* : "One of the oldest books, the Bible, is rich in promises that every man has the power to move from where he is to wherever he desires to be. But generation after generation, men and women have read these promises and said to themselves, 'This is not for me.' Yet, a few people in every generation

have said, 'This is definitely for me.' They have grasped the true nature of their own minds and pushed ahead until they have lifted man to his present state of civilisation."

The Gita also should be looked upon as a practical guide and as a source of inspiration in our quest for mental peace. Swami Nikhilananda, in his book, *The Bhagavad Gita*, (published by Ramakrishna Vivekananda Centre, New York) says that a reader can grasp "the real meaning" of the Gita only if he is equipped with the four qualifications which are necessary for the spiritual aspirant. The author observes : "He must possess the power of discriminating between the real and the unreal ; he must cultivate the will to renounce the unreal ; he must be endowed with the 'six spiritual virtues', namely, control of the senses, control of the mind, forbearance, withdrawal from the distracting objects of the world, faith, and one-pointedness of mind; lastly, he must have an intense longing for liberation from the illusory experiences of the relative world." But how is an individual to equip himself with these qualities unless he first becomes a diligent student of the Gita and a sincere practitioner of its principles? Is it not rather unrealistic to prescribe certain qualifications which alone will entitle a person to grasp the true significance of the Gita? Though numerous studies and commentaries have been published on the Gita, no one can claim that only one's own interpretation is right. While the views of scholars are undoubtedly valuable and useful, every individual has to learn the appropriate lessons from the Gita by applying his own understanding of the various issues discussed in it. Dr. Norman Vincent Peale says in his book, *Stay Alive All Your Life* : "In attaining peace of mind, the ultimate method is to establish a close contact with God. As you live in harmony with His teachings, gradually you will build up a very strong consciousness of His presence. When that occurs there will come to you a deep and profound peace that nothing can shatter. Then you will be able to handle your difficulties with greatly increased effectiveness." This is indeed the kind of mental peace that every one looks forward to achieve and, as we have explained in subsequent chapters, the Gita contains words of practical wisdom which will stand us in good stead in our daily life.

## III

## HAVE FAITH IN FAITH

What is faith? Does it mean the same thing as trust or belief? In ordinary language, all these words are generally used as if they mean the same thing. But, in the context of the Gita, faith definitely means something much more than mere belief or trust.

According to *Use The Right Word, A Modern Guide to Synonyms*, published by the Reader's Digest Association Proprietary Limited, "faith is an intensification of trust, suggesting an even deeper conviction of fidelity and integrity, often in spite of no evidence whatever or even in the face of contrary evidence." This authoritative publication has explained that "the word emphasises such a deep-seated conviction that it is appropriate in a religious context to refer to belief based on steadfast loyalty rather than on demonstrable evidence."

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says, in his book *The Bhagavadgita*, (published by George Allen & Unwin) that "*shraddha* or faith is not acceptance of a belief. It is striving after self-realisation by concentrating the powers of the mind on a given ideal." He adds: "Faith is the pressure of the spirit on humanity, the force that urges humanity towards what is better, not only in the order of knowledge but in the whole order of spiritual life. Faith, as the inward sense of truth, points to the object over which fuller light is shed later." According to Swami Nikhilananda, "The untranslatable Sanskrit word *Sraddha* denotes an intuitive conviction of the existence of Truth and also a mental attitude, on the part of the aspirant, consisting primarily of sincerity of purpose, humility, and reverence." Whatever scholars may say about the exact meaning of this word, to the common man, irrespective of the religion to which he belongs, faith is intimately associated with the existence of an Invisible Being who is the creator of all things.

One of the most important and valuable lessons emphasised by the Gita is to have firm faith both in God and in oneself. All great religions have stressed the vital importance of faith for achieving success in spiritual and material fields. The Bible, for instance, has said in many places that if a man develops faith in himself even to a small extent it will enable him to face and fight all obstacles.

"If you have faith, nothing is impossible unto you," says the Bible; and it adds, "Be it done according to your faith. All things are possible to him who believeth."

The Bible assures: "Ask, and it shall be given you; Seek, and ye shall find; Knock, and it shall be opened unto you, for everyone that asketh, receiveth and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Again, the Bible asserts: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

There are many other interesting and important passages in the Bible, which exhort the individual to cast off his doubts, to realise his own immense potential, and to attain peace and happiness. Millions of people all over the world have literally believed in these words, moulded their personality according to the principles of the Bible, and have attained remarkable results.

Islam also teaches the tremendous power of faith. In fact, the life of Mohammed, the Prophet, is a shining example of the marvellous things which one could achieve by sheer faith and persistence. In his interesting book, *The Arabs*, Anthony Nutting discusses the question as to "how could one man have led so many of his fellows to disavow their life of idolatry and pleasure for the stern and stony path of the true faith" and observes that "no man understood his fellow-men better than he. And, for all his weaknesses, it was this understanding that enabled him to triumph against selfishness and superstition and to create a new faith that was ultimately to capture the hearts of one-eighth of the human race."

Faith breeds self-confidence and helps to bring into full play one's dormant abilities and to realise one's ambitions. Many authors of inspirational books have given the highest importance to the need to cultivate faith in a systematic manner so that it can create the right frame of mind which is so essential to obtain the desired results. Napoleon Hill, for instance, in his book, *Think And Grow Rich* (published by Fawcett World Library, New York), explains the nature of faith as follows: "Have faith in yourself: faith in the Infinite.

Faith is the eternal elixir which gives life, power and action to the impulse of thought.

Faith is the starting point of all accumulation of riches.

Faith is the basis of all miracles and mysteries which cannot be analysed by the rules of science.

Faith is the only known antidote for failure.

Faith is the element, the 'chemical' which, when mixed with prayer, gives one direct communication with Infinite Intelligence.

Faith is the element which transforms the ordinary vibrations of thought, created by the finite mind of man, into the spiritual equivalent.

Faith is the only agency through which the cosmic force of Infinite Intelligence can be harnessed and used by man."

Study of the Gita helps one not only to develop faith in God but to apply it in one's daily life. And faith, to be effective, must be practised sincerely. Mahatma Gandhi's amazing career is an eloquent testimony to the power of faith. He has frankly acknowledged the debt he owes to the Gita for creating in him the magnificent power of belief. The fact that Gandhiji could shake the very foundations of the mighty British empire by his moral force and provide inspiration and leadership to millions of his countrymen was, of course, largely due to the immense faith that he had in himself, in his country and in God.

Gandhiji looked upon the Gita not merely as a source of spiritual strength and comfort but as something more personal and intimate. He wrote: "I lost my mother, who gave me birth long ago but this eternal mother (i.e. the Gita) has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never changed. She has never failed me when I am in difficulty or distress. I seek refuge in her bosom. I can declare that the Gita is ever presenting me with fresh lessons and if somebody tells me that it is my delusion, I regard it it as my richest treasure."

The Gita contains several beautiful passages in which Krishna promises peace of mind to those who firmly believe in Him. For example, in chapter III, verses 30 and 31 He says: "Those who constantly follow my teaching in full faith and without quibbling get released from the bondage of actions. But those who question my teaching and do not act accordingly will be denied enlightenment and, being unable to distinguish between right and wrong, are doomed to be lost." In chapter VII Krishna further emphasises the imperative need to have firm faith in Him and promises the fulfilment of desires. In verse 21, He says: "I make the devotees faith unshakeable in whatever forms he seeks to worship me with sincerity," and adds, in the next verse that "equipped with that faith, he indulges in worship in that form and from it he gets his desires which are actually granted by Me." The Lord assures full protection to all those who worship Him heart and soul. He will never let them down. This idea is clearly explained in chapter IX, verse 22 in which He says: "I provide prosperity and security to those who worship Me alone, without thought of others, and who are always devoted to Me." In the same chapter, verse 29, Krishna says: "To all beings I am the same, none is hateful and none is dear. But they are in Me who worship Me with sincerity and I am also in them."

It is significant to note that Krishna has promised redemption even to those who have not been of good conduct in the past, provided they worship Him with concentration. He makes no distinction based on birth, caste or sex so long as the individual is full of devotion. This is explained in verse

32 of the ninth chapter, which says that all who take refuge in Him attain the Supreme Goal, irrespective of the fact whether they belonged to such castes as *vaisya* or *sudra* or whether they happen to be men or women.

Krishna then tells Arjuna "to concentrate your attention on Me, to sacrifice for Me, to bow to Me and having fixed yourself on Me as the Supreme Goal, you will attain Me."

The cultivation of faith becomes relatively easy when one comes to know about the nature of God and His attributes. Krishna clearly describes His divine features and qualities as to enable the devotee to have a better idea of His powers. In verse 8 of chapter X Krishna says that "I am the source of origin of everything. All things emanate from Me. The wise people are aware of this and they worship Me with all their mind."

In the next verse Krishna says that "by fixing their minds on Me, with their lives engrossed in Me and illuminating one another and constantly talking of Me, they attain joy and contentment every day." He assures that to such persons He gives discrimination and wisdom. Then, in a series of scintillating verses Krishna dwells at length on His various manifestations. These are only illustrative; how can they be exhaustive? He makes it clear in verse 39 that "there is no being, animate or inanimate, which can exist without Him and that all that is prosperous and powerful has emanated from a speck of His splendour."

In chapter seventeen, Krishna speaks of three kinds of faith which are influenced by *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. He gives this explanation in response to Arjuna's question about the nature of devotion of those who offer sacrifice to Gods in faith but in disregard of the injunctions of the scriptures. The Lord says that each man's faith is determined by his natural disposition. His faith reveals his character. *Sattva* represents purity and harmony, *rajas* passion and *tamas* ignorance and indolence. Krishna says that the pure men worship the Gods, the passionate people adore the demi-gods and the dull ones revere the ghosts and spirits.

It is thus clear that those who develop *sattva* qualities and have a deep faith in God will be able to condition their mind in such a manner as to overcome all worries and remain imperturbable. It is important to note that science and faith are not really contradictory to each other.

As Tryon Edwards says, "Science has sometimes been said to be opposed to faith, and inconsistent with it. But all science, in fact, rests on the basis of faith, for it assumes the permanence and uniformity of natural laws—a thing which can never be demonstrated."

Ralph Waldeo Emerson has said, "all I have seen teaches me to trust the creator for all I have not seen" Having thus learnt about the mighty power of faith, let us see in the next chapter how prayer, properly offered, helps to achieve peace of mind.

## IV

## PRAY FOR PEACE

Although prayer in various forms is common to all religions its real significance has not been generally understood. Prayer is often looked upon as an appeal or a petition to God, asking for some favour or the other. It is often regarded as nothing more than a recitation in a routine manner of "slokas" or "mantras" to please and propitiate God. Viewed in this light, prayer becomes ineffective and, at best, can offer only superficial satisfaction. But prayer, rightly understood and practised, can be a source of power and strength and contribute immensely to secure peace of mind.

Not only saints and leaders of religion but even scientists, statesmen, generals, and men of stupendous achievements in various fields have used prayer with remarkable results. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, utilised prayer not only for his own spiritual uplift but for bringing about harmony among the people of different religions.

From a very early age, Gandhiji realised the tremendous things that prayer could do both for promoting the welfare of individuals and nations. His advice on how to use prayer in daily life is of great practical value. He says : "Begin your day with prayer and make it so soulful that it may remain with you until the evening. Close the day with prayer so that you may have a peaceful night free from dreams and nightmares. Do not worry about the form of prayer. Let it be in any form. It should be such as can put you into communication with the divine. Only, whatever be the form, let not the spirit wander while the words of prayer run out of your mouth."

Gandhi's prayer meetings used to draw record crowds and contributed a great deal towards national integration, and it was while going to one such meeting that he was most cruelly murdered. Many other great statesmen of the world like Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Churchill and

Eisenhower have also found in prayer a tremendous source of spiritual, physical and moral strength.

Prayer gives not only peace of mind but also strength to the body. It is known to have cured diseases of various kinds some of which have been of a chronic nature. This has been confirmed by no less an authority than Dr. Alexis Carrel, a winner of Nobel Prize for Medicine. He has observed: "As a physician I have seen men, when all other therapy has failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effect of prayer. It is the only power in the world that seems to overcome the laws of nature; and the occasions when prayer has dramatically done this have been termed as miracles. But a constant and quieter miracle takes place hourly in the hearts and minds of men who have found that prayer supplies them with a sustaining power in their daily lives."

Dr. Carrel has said that prayer also is a source of dynamic energy. His words deserve to be quoted: "When we pray, we link ourselves with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe. Even in asking, our human deficiencies are filled and we arise, strengthened and repaired." Any one who reads the Gita and understands the real significance of its message cannot but agree with Dr. Carrel about the great power of prayer.

In several passages in the Gita, Krishna explains His origin and the role He plays in promoting the welfare of humanity. In chapter IV verse 5, He says to Arjuna, "Many births have been taken by Me and by you. I know them all but you do not." Then, He points out that, "Though I am unborn, eternal and the Lord of all beings, by subjugating my *Prakriti*, I come into being by my own *maya* or power." In verses 7 and 8, He reminds Arjuna, "I incarnate Myself whenever there is a decline of righteousness and ascendancy of unrighteousness. For protecting the good, for destroying the wicked and for perpetuating the rule of reason, I am born from age to age." These assurances should help to create in the individual a real awareness of the greatness of God. Krishna specifically says in chapter IX, verse 22 that "to those who only worship Me and no one else and who are pious I provide complete security." Further, He says that "even those devotees

who faithfully worship other gods, actually worship Me, though contrary to the traditional practice."

It is wrong to think that those who have committed sin are condemned for ever. On the other hand, even they can attain peace of mind provided they sincerely repent for their actions and are determined to lead a life of righteousness. In chapter IX, verses 30 and 31 He says, "Even a confirmed sinner can become righteous if he worships Me with sincerity. Soon, he becomes a righteous person and attains permanent peace. Know for certain that My devotee will never perish."

But these assurances should be understood in the right perspective. Surely, they do not imply that one can commit sin and get away with it by praying to God for pardon. The significance of this statement will be better understood from the following commentary by Dr. Radhakrishnan : "This verse does not mean that there is an easy escape from the consequences of our deeds. We cannot prevent the cause from producing the effect. Any arbitrary interference with the order of the world is not permitted. When the sinner turns to God with undistracted devotion, a new cause is introduced. His redemption is conditional on his repentance. Repentance is a genuine change of heart and includes contrition or sorrow for the past and decision to prevent a repetition of it in the future. When once the resolution is adopted, the transformation of the lower into the higher is steadily effected. If we believe in human effort, the growth may be hard. Error, imperfection and self-will are difficult to overcome but when the soul gives up its ego and opens itself to the Divine, the Divine takes up the burden and lifts the soul into the spiritual plane." (*Bhagavadgita*, page 251)

Therefore, by praying persistently, sincerely and in the right manner, an individual can achieve peace of mind even if his past conduct has not been righteous. It is worth noting that the Lord has promised redemption not merely to those who have committed small sins or minor mistakes but even to those who have done the most serious misdeeds. He also makes it quite clear in the same chapter verse 29 : "To all beings I am the same. There is none hateful or dear

to me. They who worship Me with devotion are in Me and I am in them."

What is more important from the point of view of achieving mental peace is one's sincerity and humility. As Mahatma Gandhi says, "Worship or prayer is no height of eloquence. It is no lip-homage. It springs from the heart. If, therefore, we achieve that purity of the heart when it is emptied of all but love, if we keep all the chords in proper tune, they 'trembling pass in music out of sight.' Prayer needs no speech. It is in itself independent of any sensuous effort. I have not the slightest doubt that prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passions. But it must be combined with the utmost humility."

Many persons have found from their experience that prayer does not always produce the desired results. In such cases, the fault is not with prayer but probably with the manner of offering prayer. When a man prays in a superficial manner and without a strong and positive belief in getting what he wants to achieve, naturally the results will be disappointing. But when a man prays with the utmost sincerity and backs it up with action appropriate to his desire, he is most likely to achieve his goal.

Consider, for example, what Dr. Norman Vincent Peale says in his book, *Stay Alive With All Your Life*, "Praying prayers is of tremendous importance in gaining power over your difficulties. God will grant big things if you ask for them and are big enough to receive them." He adds: "You must have faith if prayer is to do big things for you. And if you are not getting answers, it may be that your prayers are not big enough. Do not pray little prayers—pray big prayers. You are praying to a big God. Perhaps He knows that a small prayer is backed only by a small faith; and the Bible tells us that He rates our sincerity by our faith. Perhaps, He also rates our capacity to receive by our faith. Ask for right things and ask right. Ask with faith and pray big. Pray big prayers and you will get big answers."

It is a mistake to suppose that prayer should always be accompanied by the material offerings of various kinds to

God. Krishna makes it clear in several places in the Gita that He attaches more importance to sincerity than to anything else. In the famous passage, verse 26 of chapter IX, Krishna says that He accepts whatever is offered—a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water provided it is done with devotion. The individual therefore should pray with the utmost sincerity in the fervent expectation that his voice will be heard. As Ramakrishna has said: "Pray unto Him in any way you like. He is sure to hear you, for He can hear even the footfall of an ant." It is also relevant to remember the wise words of Soren Kierkegaad: "When you read God's word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, 'it is talking to me, and about me."

V

## DESIRE — THE GREAT MOTIVATOR

Many translators and commentators on the Gita have created an impression that Krishna wants man to give up all desires in order to attain salvation. Such an interpretation is not only misleading but is positively harmful to the growth of one's personality and the attainment of spiritual powers. It is true that in many passages Krishna urges on the need to abandon desires. But, surely, He refers to those desires which are born of greed or selfishness, which disturb our peace of mind, and prevent us from putting forth our best efforts. Krishna certainly could not have meant that man should have no desire at all.

The history of the world's civilisation clearly shows that desire has been a powerful motivating force which has made possible many stupendous achievements. In the field of art, science, literature, and even religion it was desire that spurred man's ambitions and helped the attainment of goals which, at one time, were thought to be incredible or impossible. The great religions of the world have been able to make a tremendous impact only because their founders and followers were imbued with a burning desire to spread what they considered to be the gospel of God. Could Islam ever have grown into a mighty force if Mohammed, the Prophet, had not been fired with an irresistible desire to start a new religion ? Could the social reformers in various countries have rendered such splendid services to humanity if they had not been inspired by a deep desire to eliminate injustice, inequality and iniquity in various forms ?

According to Willa Sibert Cather, "nothing is far and nothing is near, if one desires. The world is little, human life is little. There is only one big thing—desire. And before it, when it is big, all is little."

A careful perusal of the Gita reveals that Krishna actually wants people to kill not all desires but only those which come

into conflict with the good of the society. In fact, Krishna's aim in propounding the Gita was to instil in Arjuna a strong desire to fight and thus do his duty. In chapter II, verse 31, Krishna tells Arjuna that to a *Kshatriya* there is no more sacred task than a just and righteous war and therefore he should not hesitate to do it. In the next verse, He says that blessed are the *Kshatriyas* who could get opportunities unsought to fight in wars. Thus Krishna wanted to create in Arjuna the desire and the determination to fight for a noble cause. He explained clearly the consequences that would follow if Arjuna gave up all the desire to fight. He said that if Arjuna did so, he would not only be betraying his honour and duty but would be committing sin. Moreover, his reputation as a noble warrior of unparalleled courage would be tarnished. Friends and foes alike would attribute various motives to him for not fighting, and for fleeing from one's fundamental duty. Could anything be more shameful or painful than such a situation? On the other hand, if Arjuna came out victorious he would gain eternal fame and, if killed, he would, of course, go to Heaven. Therefore, He says : "Rise up, son of Kunti, determined to fight. Plunge yourself in battle, considering alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, success and defeat. Thus you will commit no sin."

In the above passages, Krishna persuasively tries to motivate Arjuna to fight. Krishna knows that unless this desire was sufficiently powerful, it would not induce Arjuna to perform his duty. So, the Lord adopts a twofold approach to kindle this desire—first, by telling him about the negative nature of the consequences such as loss of face and fame,and secondly, about the positive aspects like deriving supreme satisfaction of doing one's duty and going to Heaven in fulfilling this task.

It is therefore inconceivable that Krishna's aim in the Gita is to exhort man to lead a life devoid of all desire. On the other hand, a proper understanding of the background to the Gita shows beyond doubt that Krishna wants people to avoid only those desires that stir such harmful emotions as anger, indiscipline, indifference and inefficiency. In chapter II, verse 62, Krishna says that by concentrating on the

objects of senses, man becomes too much attached to them and from this attachment emanates desire which leads to anger. This, in turn, leads to other harmful consequences. But this passage does not involve an indictment of all desires as such. It refers only to those desires which are of an indiscriminate character and which arise from a mind which is not under control. This will be quite clear from verse 67 of the same chapter in which Krishna compares a man who has no control over oneself to a boat that is swept away by the wind. In verse 70 Krishna further explains how difficult it is for a man without self-control to attain mental peace. He says: "Not the man of desires but that person attains peace, in whom are merged all desires just as rivers flow into the sea which is full and motionless." In verse 71, He observes that that man achieves peace who is freed from all desires and does not bother about thoughts of 'I' and 'mine', and in the next verse He explains that this is the Brahman state. By concentrating on it, one can achieve *Brahmanirvānam* (bliss of God) even at the hour of death.

Mr. Morarji Desai has translated these passages as follows: "Just as the sea remains unruffled even when waters of many rivers enter it, the person who has control over himself and his organs, remains unruffled in the presence of all temptations and desires, but not the person who is full of desires. The person who gives up all desires, acts in a detached manner and is without any likes or dislikes, gets complete peace. This is the knowledge of God, O Arjuna, reaching that stage, one does not get attracted by anything and remaining in that state, after death he reaches Brahma."

Mr. Desai's translation is literally correct but not his interpretation. Is it right to say that a person should give up "all desires" in order to get complete peace? How can a man aspire for peace of mind unless he has an irresistible desire for the same and is prepared to pay the price for it? This price, of course, is to be paid in the form of control of senses, disciplined life, a firm faith in ourselves and in God.

There are also other passages in the Gita which do not seem to have been correctly interpreted. For example, in

chapter III, verse 37, the Lord says : "It is desire, it is wrath, which springs from the all-consuming, all-sinful passion. Know this as the enemy here in this world." In verse 38, He says: "Just as fire is enveloped by smoke, mirror by dust, and the embryo by the womb, so knowledge is shut out by passion." In the next verse Krishna observes : "Knowledge is enveloped by desire which can never be satisfied and which is the eternal enemy of the wise."

Commenting on these passages, Swami Nikhilananda says that "desire alone is the enemy of the whole world, the cause of all evil," that "desire, being obstructed, takes the form of wrath", that "desire brings only suffering" and that "one gets rid of desire only through the constant practice of detachment." Swami Nikhilananda points out that "man commits sin only at the bidding of desire." Dr. Radhakrishnan quotes the verse from the *upanishad* which says : "The human mind is of two kinds, pure and impure. That which is intent on securing its desires is impure. That which is free from attachment to desire is pure." But these interpretations do not seem to be in tune with the spirit and substance of the Gita. In chapter III, the Lord says in verse 10: "In ancient times, Brahma when he created man together with sacrifice, said 'by this you shall multiply and let this be your *kamdhuk* or cow of abundance, which will give you the milk of your desires." Dr. Annie Besant refers to *kamdhuk* as "the cow of Indra, from which each could milk what he wished for. Hence the giver of desired objects." Dr. Radhakrishnan says that *kamdhuk* is the "mythical cow of Indra from which one can get all one's desires." Therefore, how it can be said that the Gita calls upon us to abandon all our desires ?

What the Gita urges is the need to give up lust, not desire. Lust and desire are not the same thing. Lust refers to craving for something for which there is no moral justification and which is not in the interest of the person concerned. On the other hand, desire can be a great motivating force which does help to achieve peace of mind.

Mahatma Gandhi said that "the conquest of lust is the highest endeavour of a man's or woman's existence" and that "God's grace will never descend upon a man who is slave to

lust." Claude Adrien Helvetius remarked: "By annihilating the desires, you annihilate mind. Every man without passions has within him no principle of action, nor motive to act." According to Thomas Hobbes, "Our nature is inseparable from desires and the very word desire—the craving for something not possessed—implies that our present facility is not complete "*

Therefore, Krishna's advice to abandon desire has to be understood in the proper perspective. Viewed in this manner, desire can certainly contribute powerfully to the attainment of mental peace.

* In this context the reader may refer to the different meanings of want, covet, crave, desire and wish, as given in the Reader's Digest publication—*Use The Right Word, A Modern Guide To Synonyms* (page 672). Referring to desire, it says : "*Desire* can also function as a more formal substitute for *want*; asking if he *desired* another drink; the many people who desire better working conditions and more education for their children. The special province of the word is in referring to sexual or sensual appetite or need; a growing sexual hunger that more and more *desired* expression; *desiring* her more intensely than any woman he had ever known; *desiring* all sorts of Sybaritic pleasures."

## VI

## THE PLACE OF FEAR

How to conquer fear is one of the most important lessons that one should learn from the Gita. Nothing hurts the peace of mind so severely as fear. We have seen in an earlier chapter how Arjuna was terribly frightened at the prospect of having to fight his own kith and kin. Indeed, fear overwhelmed him to such an extent that it seriously upset him both in mind and body. Again, Arjuna trembles with fear when he sees the Lord in his Iswara form.

In chapter XI Arjuna dwells at length on the various manifestations in which he sees Krishna and refers to the tremendous impact of His personality on the entire universe. In verses 15 to 31 Arjuna describes in detail the many attributes of the Lord and points out how he is actually afraid to see Him in that form. In verse 20, Arjuna says : "You alone have filled this space between heaven and earth and all the regions. O Mahatman, the three worlds are quaking with fear on seeing your wonderful and frightful form." In verse 23 Arjuna remarks, "O mighty armed, the worlds are struck by terror and so am I on seeing you with many mouths, eyes, arms, thighs, feet, stomachs and terrible tusks."

In the next verse Arjuna again says that he is intensely afraid to see Him "touching the sky, shining with many colours, with the mouth opened wide and broad burning eyes." What Arjuna felt on this occasion was not just fear in the ordinary sense. This fear was something much deeper which so severely affected his very heart that he could see neither peace nor courage.

Consider what he tells Krishna in verse 25: "When I see your mouths, fearful with tusks and looking like Time's consuming flames, I find no peace and I am disjointed. Be merciful, O Lord of the gods, refuge of all the Universe." Therefore, Arjuna appeals to Him in verse 31: "Reveal to me who you are with such a frightening form. I salute

you, O Supreme God, have mercy, I desire to understand your inner Being. I do not know your purpose."

Arjuna appeals to Krishna to have mercy on him and to reveal Himself in the usual form holding in hand only a mace and discus. Krishna obliges and advises Arjuna not to be afraid or bewildered. He says in verse 48: "Be not frightened or bewildered at the sight of my terrible form. Blessed at heart and free from fear, you again see my former self." Arjuna is consoled and says that, having seen Krishna in the gentle human form, he stands composed and confident.

In many other chapters also, we find the Lord emphasising the futility of fear and the need for courage. For instance, in chapter XVI He spells out the numerous qualities possessed by a person with divine qualities and, among them, fearlessness (*abhayam*) is given the pride of place. Verse 1 has identified these qualities: "Courage, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge, concentration, charity, self-discipline and sacrifice, mastery of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness." Verse 2 has listed the following virtues : "Non-violence, truth and absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, dislike of slander, kindness to living beings, freedom from greed, gentleness, modesty and steadiness."

In the next verse the qualities mentioned for one who is born with divine nature include vigour, patience, forgiveness, purity, and absence of hatred and of pride.

Commenting on these verses, Mr. Morarji Desai says: "It is very suggestive that all the divine attributes begin with fearlessness. This is so because without fearlessness none of the other attributes can be obtained or maintained or acted upon. Fear is therefore the real enemy of progress towards divinity and is responsible for getting involved in the attributes which belong to the demoniacal nature. One must therefore acquire freedom from fear first."

There is no doubt that fear has a crippling effect on mind and body and that every attempt should be made to control it. But what is fear ? How many kinds of fear are there ?

Are all types of fear to be fought or do some of them serve a useful purpose ? It is necessary to analyse these questions objectively.

A little reflection will show that fear has a constructive role to play in our life so long as it is based on realities. For instance, we fear ill-health, disease and many other things which cause misery and unhappiness. But fear of this kind does serve a positive purpose by making us aware of the consequences that may follow if certain precautions are not taken. In the case of children, fear has to be instilled about certain matters so that they may not endanger their lives, as, for example, by fire or other hazardous objects.

No government can function well unless it succeeds in creating a sense of fear in the minds of its citizens that breach of law will be dealt with firmly and promptly. The effective maintenance of the rule of law, which is so essential for orderly progress and good government, cannot be achieved without creating fear in the minds of the citizens that defiance and disobedience will be followed by swift and sure punishment. But, at the same time, citizens should have absolutely no cause for fear so long as their activities do not go against the spirit and the letter of the law.

It will be thus clear that it will be unwise to create an impression that there is merit in being fearless under all circumstances. The Gita's message can only mean that one should cultivate courage in such a way as to cast off baseless fear. And, generally, it is this kind of fear that thwarts our ambitions, stifles our personality, creates tension, and affects health.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale says in his book, *You Can If You Think You Can*, that "there are a hundred and one secret fears," ranging from "agoraphobia (fear of open spaces) to claustrophobia (fear of enclosed places) to acrophobia (fear of high places)." He gives the following advice. "Take a long straight look at your fear. Know it for the ghostly thing it is and stand firmly up to it. Practise the strong action technique." He also says that "when you are afraid, do the thing you are afraid of and soon you will lose your fear of it" and that one should develop "a strong, healthy-minded faith" to

ward off fear. According to Plutarch, "the strangeness of things often makes them seem formidable when they are not so; and so by our better acquaintance, even things which are really terrible, lose much of their frightfulness."

Napoleon Hill says in his book, *Think And Grow Rich*, that every human being suffers at one time or another six basic fears, namely, fear of poverty, of criticism, of ill-health, of loss of love of someone, of old age and of death. In his opinion "fears are nothing more than states of mind." He observes, "Man creates nothing which he does not first conceive in the form of an impulse of thought. Following this statement comes another of still greater importance, namely, man's thought impulses begin immediately to translate themselves into their physical equivalent, whether those thoughts are voluntary or involuntary. Thought impulses which are picked up by mere chance (thoughts which have been released by other minds) may determine one's financial, business, professional or social destiny just as surely as the thought impulses which one creates by intent and design."

How uncontrolled fear causes misery is thus explained by Montaigne: "Those who are in pressing fear of losing their property, of being exiled, of being subjugated, live in constant anguish, losing even the capacity to drink, eat and rest; whereas the poor, the exiles, and the slaves often live as joyfully as other men. And so many people who, unable to endure the pangs of fear, have hanged themselves, drowned themselves or leaped to their death, have taught us well that fear is even more unwelcome and unbearable than death itself."

It is also interesting to note that those who deliberately create fear in others are themselves greatly disturbed in their minds. As Seneca says: "To be feared is to fear. No one has been able to strike terror into others and, at the same time, enjoy peace of mind himself."

A proper study of the Gita helps one to understand fear in the right perspective and to use it constructively for developing one's personality and for achieving peace of mind.

## VII

## ASSAULT ON ANGER

Anger is another emotion which disturbs and destroys our peace of mind. It spoils one's relationship with one's family and friends and even disrupts the growth of movements and organisations. As Lala Har Dayal, the famous scholar and author, rightly says in his book, *Hints For Self-Culture*, "If you start to be angry with some one, you should logically go on and vent your wrath upon his father, mother, teachers, grandparents, uncles, neighbours and many others, who have made him what he is. Anger thus leads you into a pathless jungle. It hurts yourself. It weakens your body and disturbs your mind. So, why be doubly foolish, and offend yourself and another? Anger is also utterly fruitless. It cannot mend a broken mirror or gather up spilt milk in the pail again. It only adds bitterness and resentment to the evil that has already been done, thus changing it from bad to worse, and worse to worst. It is like a rod that stirs your whole personality and brings up all the mud and slums from the bottom, where it lay buried out of sight."

There are numerous verses in the Gita where Krishna has stressed on the imperative need to avoid anger in order to achieve happiness. In fact, anger is often closely linked with fear, passion, lust, delusion and ruin. In chaper II, verse 56, Krishna says: "That man achieves stability of mind who is free from anxieties amid adversity, indifferent to pleasures, and is not affected by passion, fear and anger." In verses 62 and 63 of the same chapter, Krishna explains how the man whose senses are not controlled develops delusion which leads to confusion of memory, destruction of reason, ultimately leading to perdition.

On the other hand, the man who has disciplined his senses enjoys peace of mind.

Again and again, Krishna speaks of the importance of self-control as the key to attain mental peace. In chapter IV,

verse 39, the Lord asserts that the master of senses derives knowledge and, having got it, readily realises the supreme peace.

In chapter X, Krishna describes the many virtues which arise from Him alone and among them are mentioned patience and calmness which are the opposite to anger. In chapter XII verse 15, Krishna says that that person is dear to Him who is free from anger and other emotions. In the 16th chapter Krishna refers to absence of anger among the qualities which are appropriate to the man with a divine nature. On the other hand, one who is born with demoniac attributes displays anger, arrogance and conceit. He says in verse 21 of the same chapter that one should abandon anger, lust and greed. He describes them as constituting "the triple gates of hell." The suppression of these emotions is essential to enable an individual to practise what is good for him and thus attain supreme happiness.

It is important to note that control of anger is essential even for maintaining one's good health. Eminent medical authorities all over the world have cautioned against the dangerous consequences that anger may cause to one's health. It is now established beyond all doubt that frequent indulgence in anger upsets the mind and the body and leads to several serious ailments like ulcer of the stomach, blood pressure, heart disease and even sudden death.

In his excellent book, *How To Live 365 Days A year*, Dr. John A. Schindler has described the various changes that take place in the body of a man when he becomes angry. He says that these changes are "profound and remarkable." He observes: "The moment you become angry, the number of blood cells in the circulating blood increases by as much as half a million per cubic millimeter. When a person becomes angry, the muscles at the outlet of the stomach squeeze down so tightly that nothing leaves the stomach during anger, and the entire digestive track becomes so spastic that many people have severe abdominal pains either during or after a fit of anger."

Dr. Schindler also has pointed out that during anger, the heart rate rises rapidly, often to 180 or 200 or higher and the blood pressure from 130 to 230 or more.

It thus becomes clear how essential it is for every individual to control his senses to such an extent as to avoid anger. This is, of course, not easy. Even many great *rishis* at times are said to have lost their temper.

In fact, in the Gita itself there are some passages which seem to show Krishna Himself in an angry mood. In chapter XVI there are many passages in which He vehemently denounces those who are devoid of good character and conduct and who deliberately do deeds of sin. He describes those who deny the existence of God as men of small intellect and enemies of humanity. He calls them as hypocrites who are steeped in pride and arrogance and who hold wrong views because of their conceit and ignorance. In verse 19, He warns :"I constantly hurl these evil-doers—these hateful and vilest men of the world—only into the wombs of demons" and in the next verse He points out that such men never reach Him but, deluded from birth to birth, go down to the lowest condition.

But Krishna's anger was of the righteous type which is, of course, justified on occasions. Elmer Wheeler, the well-known American author, says in his book, *How To Sell Yourself To Others*, that anger, if used sparingly and cautiously, can help to solve problems. He writes that "righteous wrath is one of the most powerful instruments for influencing human behaviour." He recalls that Jesus threatened to whip the money-changers and drove them out of the temple.

How many people are aware that Abraham Lincoln, a symbol of sympathy, patience and tolerance, once physically threw out a visitor from his office ? Did not Jawaharlal Nehru burst into temper whenever he came across instances of injustice, indifference and indolence ? It is indeed difficult to control anger but, by constant training and discipline, it should surely be possible for every individual to restrain himself in situations where, normally, he may fly into a rage.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, in his many books, has also commented on the futility of resorting to anger and he has given examples of persons who have been able to achieve inner peace by a serious study of the Bible. Dr. Peale has referred to one individual who, whenever he is provoked, "flies into great calm." There is no doubt that anyone who studies the Gita regularly and with reverence, and who has the desire and the determination to acquire mental discipline should be able to achieve a great deal of success in his endeavour to control anger and allied emotions.

## VIII

## ACCENT ON ACTION

The accent on action is clearly brought out in almost every chapter of the Gita. Inaction or indifferent action is one of the main causes for the failure to achieve one's goals in life. Many people have bright ideas to make money, to improve their health, and to attain some status in society, but they seldom succeed because they do not take the appropriate action to realise their ambitions.

Some do not make the beginning at all while many give up after some attempts. Failure and frustration profoundly disturb peace of mind and stifle our personality. Our hidden talents remain largely unused because we often fail to act promptly and decisively. According to an American psychologist, James Farr, "ambition may be divided into two parts. One is goal setting, and the other is the drive to work towards that goal. In the healthy ambitious person, these forces are in satisfactory balance with each other." "In all human affairs," says philosopher James Allen, "there are efforts and there are results and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result." We should therefore realise the vital role of action. This is one of the important lessons that emerge from a study of the Gita.

In chapters II and III, Krishna tells Arjuna of the consequences of indecision and inaction even when the task before him is quite clear. In verse 41 of chapter II, He points out the perils of vacillation arising from a weak mind. He says that Karmayoga takes a person to the highest good and that "the thoughts of the irresolute persons are many-branched and without end." In chapter III, He dwells at length on the various virtues of action. In verse 8 He says : "Do the work that is obligatory. Action is far better than inaction. Even the maintenance of the body requires constant action." He quotes the examples of Janaka and others who attained perfection by action, and explains that even He continues to

engage Himself in action in spite of the fact that there is nothing in the three worlds which has not been done by Him nor is anything unattainable for Him.

Then Krishna advises Arjuna that action should be done without attachment to its fruits. This idea is expressed in several verses but more particularly in verse 47 of chapter II which says : "You are entitled only to do the work, never to its fruits. Let not the results of action motivate you, nor let there be in you any attachment to inaction."

Again, in verse 19 of chapter III, He says : "Constantly do your obligatory task without attachment for, by doing so, man verily attains supreme peace."

In chapter XII in verses 9 to 11 Krishna advises Arjuna to fix his mind steadily on Him and then try to reach Him by *Abhyāsa-Yoga* or the yoga of continuous practice. If he cannot do this he can still achieve perfection by performing actions for His sake. However, if even this is beyond his capacity, then "take refuge in me, give up the fruits of action and be self-controlled."

Many commentators on the Gita have translated these passages in a literal manner and, in doing so, have failed to bring out their real significance. When Krishna says that one should only do one's duty but not claim its fruits, He does not mean, surely, that one should be indifferent to the results of what one does. What He wants to convey is that one should not remain excessively attached to the results of one's action because it may lead to tension and anxiety. No one indeed can put forth one's best efforts if one is to be constantly worried as to what will happen if the expected results do not materialise. Therefore, in any undertaking, a person should do his utmost to achieve his aim. He should put his heart and soul into it in the hope and expectation that all will go on well.

Commenting on verse 47 of chapter II, Dr. Radhakrishnan says : "This famous verse contains the essential principle of disinterestedness. When we do our work, plough or paint, sing or think, we will be deflected from disinterestedness, if we think of fame or income or any such extraneous

considerations. Nothing matters except the goodwill, the willing fulfilment of the purpose of God. Success or failure does not depend on the individual but on other factors as well. Giordano Bruno says : 'I have fought that is much, victory is in the hands of fate.'"

But what exactly is meant by disinterestedness ? Does it mean absence of interest in what one is doing ? The Reader's Digest's publication, *Use The Right Word* says : "Disinterestedness does not imply a lack of interest, as is sometimes mistakenly thought but a receptive interest that does not take sides in a dispute, at least until the truth is discoverd : disinterested judges and jurors on which a just trial depends. To be disinterested, in fact, requires attentiveness to detail and an evenness of temper, though it by no means implies coldness or lack of feeling." In the context of the Gita, therefore, disinterestedness cannot mean an attitude of indifference to the results of one's action.

Dr. Radhakrishnan observes, commenting on verse 11 of chapter XII : "If you cannot dedicate all your works to the Divine, then do the work without desire of the fruit. Adopt the yoga of desireless action, *niskāmakarma*. We can renounce all personal striving, resign ourselves completely and solely to God's saving power, submit to self-discipline and work, abandoning all thought of reward." But can one achieve excellence in work by giving up "all thought of reward ?"

Psychologists say that, generally, a person gets what he expects. Most people fail because they anticipate failure while those who succeed have carefully trained their minds to think positively. The Gita's message can be taken to mean only that one should not be attached to the fruits of one's actions to such an extent as to prevent one from concentrating all energy and attention on the task in hand. It is clear therefore that the real significance of renouncing the fruits of one's work is not what seems apparent from a superficial reading and rendering of the relevant passages.

Great achievers in all countries and at all times have always believed in action in order to fulfil their goals.

However, it is not easy to decide when and how to act. Action at the wrong time may produce undesirable and even harmful consequences. Many persons fail to act promptly because of fear. Some, by training and temperament, are unable or unwilling to act at the right time. Procrastination is a habit with many people and it is difficult to break it.

In his book, *Dynamic Thinking*, Robert J.O' Reilly refers to the evils of putting off one's decision, and describes this trait as "to-morrow-itis." He says : "I call 'tomorrow-itis' a deadly *habit* — and that's all, it is a habit. And just like any of our other habits, it begins simply and innocently enough *with our consent*. The degree to which it now hinders our success is closely related to how firmly we have let this deadly habit become embedded in our personality."

Many successful people have adopted the formula : "Do it now" and they claim that it has helped them to do big things. For instance, Clement Stone, one of the most successful entrepreneurs and distinguished citizens of the USA, says that the principle of prompt action has been a major factor in contributing to his success. He observes : "May I humbly say that I believe that the habit of 'do it now' is one of my greatest assets. This habit is so much a part of my life that I believe I exercise it today as efficiently as I did in the early days of a growing business. I am not referring to hare–brained decisions. You must take time to gather all the facts; after this, there is no reason for procrastination. I still get a real thrill from the power of action. For action is a vital part of the power of persuasion for all human relations."

## IX

## MERIT OF MODERATION

The Gita has laid considerable stress on the need for moderation in eating and sleeping and, in fact, in practically all kinds of activities relating to one's bodily welfare. It emphasises the vital importance of keeping one's body in a high degree of efficiency so that all its organs work together in perfect harmony and produce sound health which is so essential to peace of mind. Illness is generally caused by the deliberate defiance of the natural laws of health. It is the fundamental duty of every citizen to do his utmost to protect and promote his health as best as he can, not only in his own interest but also in that of his family, society and the country; and in this respect, the teachings of the Gita are of great relevance today and for all times.

Dr. Annie Besant says that "moderation is the keynote of the Gita, and the harmonising of all the constituents of man, till they vibrate in perfect attunement with the One, the Supreme Self. This is the aim the disciple is to set before him."

In chapter VI, Krishna tells Arjuna that yoga can be attained only by those who refrain from excess in eating and sleeping. According to Dr. Annie Besant, "yoga is literally union, and it means harmony with the divine law, he becoming one with the divine life, by the subdual of all outward going energies." Krishna points out, however, that while one should avoid eating too much, at the same time, one should also guard against eating too little.

Verse 16 of the chapter VI says : "Yoga cannot be realised by him who eats too much and by him who eats too little. O Arjuna, yoga is not for him who sleeps too heavily or too lightly." Swami Nikhilananda says that, "according to the books on yoga, a yogi should fill half his stomach with food, one quarter with water, and leave one quarter for the movement of air." Oliver Cromwell said : "Some people

have food but no appetite. Others have an appetite but no food. I have both. The Lord be praised." Benjamin Franklin wrote : "I saw few die of hunger; of eating, a hundred thousand."

In verse 17 Krishna explains that for the person who observes moderation in eating, sleeping, recreation and in other activities, it is easier to attain yoga which eliminates all sorrow.

Many eminent authorities on health and medicine have extolled the great merit of eating in moderation from the point of view of maintaining good health. Poets and philosophers down the ages have also praised this virtue. For instance, Saadi, the Persian poet, wrote : "Eat not so much that the food comes out of thy mouth again: and eat not so little that the soul comes out of the body." According to one authority, "What we leave after making a heavy meal does us more good than what we have eaten." The good health of famous centenarians and others who have lived long life is mainly due to their habit of eating in moderation.

It is interesting to note that the Gita contains advice on not only how much one should eat but also on what to eat and what to avoid. In chapter XVII, in verses 8, 9 and 10 Krishna says that *sattvikas* or good people eat foods that help to increase vitality, vigour, joy and cheerfulness and which are also pleasant and palatable. The *rajasikas* or the passionate persons like foods that are bitter, sour, saline, and too hot and produce discomfort and disease. The *tamasikas* or dull people consume the food that is impure, stale, tasteless, badly cooked and left-over.

While moderation is undoubtedly a very valuable virtue for attaining good health and peace of mind, there cannot be any rigidity in this matter. What constitutes moderation to one person may be excess to another.

For instance, the late Sardar K. M. Panikkar, who served as adviser to many maharajas, writes as follows about the food habits of the ruler of Patiala, in his autobiography : "Maharaja Bhupendra Singh of Patiala was a veritable

Duryodhana among princes, an admirable example of Punjabi manhood. Although in looks he resembled the princes of Kauravas, in the matter of eating, he was a veritable Bhima. The royal table surpassed that of most other princes : even in quantity, he consumed as much as ten ordinary mortals. At one time he used to consume a normal meal with others and then sit down by himself to consume a whole roast lamb! One evening while four or five of us were travelling by train, I was astounded to see him eat twenty-five quails, casually, one after another, in the same way as we munch banana wafers. On the day of his death, his attenuated diet consisted of an omelette of ten eggs."*

There cannot therefore be any hard and fast rule regarding the quantity and quality of food that one should take. This is a matter largely of individual choice. But the Gita's stress on moderation is certainly valid as an essential prerequisite for good health and sound mind.

As Gayelord Hauser, an eminent dietitian, lecturer and author, has said, "What is meant by good nutrition ? First, it is adequate nutrition, giving the individual cells of the body not only the quantity but also the quality of nourishment they require. Second, it is balanced nutrition, supplying the body cells with vital nutrients in the proper proportion. Scientists are unanimous in agreeing that over-nutrition, through excess calories stored as fat, can contribute materially to physical deterioration and the ageing process."

The Gita urges moderation in sleeping as well. Too much of sleep is as bad as too little of it. Sleeplessness has become a chronic malady with millions of people all over the world. Sleeping pills have become indispensable for many people. Medical experts have warned about the serious consequences arising from the indiscriminate consumption of sleeping pills. According to the *New York Times*, an expert panel of the National Academy of Sciences has found that "the sleeping pills swallowed nightly by millions of Americans are potentially dangerous and largely ineffective." Sleeping pills

*K. M. Panikkar. *An Autobiography*—Translated from Malayalam by K. Krishnamurthy (Oxford University Press).

aggravate the problem of sleeplessness. The newspaper added: "Sleeping pills are commonly prescribed inappropriately for the elderly, most of whose sleep problems are due to depression or illness that should be treated first. Yet, 39% of the 8.5 million prescriptions for sleeping pills are written for persons who are 60 and older."

It should be realised that sound sleep which refreshes and recreates the body depends to a large extent on what one eats and drinks, and, above all, on one's mental attitude. If the mind is full of worry, anger, hatred and resentment, sleep is bound to be disturbed. Again and again, Krishna has observed that man should give up those habits which disturb mental peace and also upset physical well-being. There is little doubt that a proper study of the Gita and the sincere practice of its principles, at least in their fundamental aspects, will help one to live vigorously and well and have full enthusiasm for life.

The Gita recommends moderation not only in eating and sleeping but in recreation as well. Recreation has certainly a place in our daily life but it should not be over-done. It should be a means to an end and not an end itself. The achievement of mental discipline should make it possible to avoid excesses in everything and attain a high level of excellence.

# X

## THE GREAT ART OF GIVING

An important lesson taught by the Gita, which has not received much attention, relates to the practice of philanthropy in promoting peace of mind. It is well known that the mere acquisition of wealth by itself does not contribute to one's happiness. It is essential to share one's prosperity with others. Andrew Carnegie, the famous millionaire and philanthropist, wrote : "Surplus wealth is a sacred trust which its possesser should administer in his lifetime for the good of the community." Another successful financier of the USA said : "Money is like manure. If you spread it around, it does a lot of good. But if you pile it up in one place it stinks like hell." The history of the USA, the world's most prosperous country, provides numerous examples of individuals who amassed huge fortunes but were able to enjoy their fruit only after they began to donate liberally for various noble causes. Mahatma Gandhi's famous concept of trusteeship is based on the principle that wealth should be earned and used not for one's own pride, power and possession but only as a means of promoting social good.

Norman Vincent Peale writes with eloquence and enthusiasm in recommending the art of giving away one's wealth as one of the most effective ways of acquiring mental peace. According to him, "A basic fact of successful living is that, to receive the good things of life, you must give. This is the secret of the law of abundance."

He says : "To receive the good things of this life, you must first give. Firmly imbed that idea in your consciousness. Say it over and over. Let your mind dwell on it until it becomes a fundamental part of your thought pattern. To receive the good things of life, you must first give. I cannot over-emphasise its importance. It can change anyone's situation."

In chapter XVI, Lord Krishna emphasises the futility and absurdity of acquiring wealth merely for one's glorification. He says that the people of evil nature try to hoard wealth by resorting to all kinds of tactics and, in doing so, follow selfish pursuits. In verse 12, He observes that the ignorant men, lured by lust, anger and false hopes, attempt to gain by unjust means enormous wealth for enjoyment. They also boast about it in a vulgar manner : "Today, I have gained this. I shall fulfil this desire. This wealth belongs to me and it shall be mine in future."

Again, such a man says : "I am born rich. Who is there equal to me ?" Krishna says that such people are conceited, obstinate, proud, and intoxicated with wealth.

In chapter XVII Krishna dwells on the importance of offering gifts but He points that this should be done in a dignified manner. In verse 12 He says that what is performed in the expectation of reward or self-glorification belongs to the category of *rajasika yajna.* On the other hand, that which is given in the true spirit comes in the field of *sattvika.*

In verse 20, the Lord says : "The gift which is given to one who cannot give anything in return, in the belief that it is one's duty to give, and which is offered at the proper time and place and to a deserving person, is held to be *sattvika.*"

In the next verse, He says that "the gift given with expectation of reward or results or reluctantly is described as *rajasika.*" Besides, it is stated that the gift offered at a wrong time or place to undeserving persons and causes, and in an undignified manner, is in the category of *tamasika.* Therefore, the Lord says that those who seek salvation should give expecting no reward.

These principles are as pertinent at present as they were in the days of the *Mahabharata.* We find many wealthy people giving away their money for various purposes. But how many persons do so in the spirit enjoined in the Gita ? Some give only for perpetuating their names or of their families for posterity. Some give only after a great deal of pressure and persuasion. There are some who give with a fanfare of

publicity. They feel unhappy if their generosity is not promptly and properly noticed in the newspapers. Gifts offered in these ways may serve some social purposes. But certainly they do not bring that kind of mental and spiritual satisfaction which only they can get who give ungrudgingly and sincerely so that worthy causes can prosper and deserving persons can benefit.

The Gita's emphasis on the right kind of philanthropy needs to be stressed again and again at the present time when social tensions mount in every country because of the drastic inequalities in wealth and incomes. It is true that an equalitarian society can be achieved only by legislation and education. But in the meanwhile, every citizen can certainly contribute his best to the promotion of social welfare by practising the art of giving on the lines laid down in the Gita. How much money one gives away is not so much important as how it is given and to whom it goes. Even the smallest contribution in money or kind can ultimately go a long way in helping individuals and institutions.

Jesus Christ said : "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen by them. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Once, after curing a leper, Jesus warned him not to tell any man about it. Wordsworth wrote of that best portion of a good man's life : "his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love." The Reverend Gordon Powell wrote : "It is amazing how much good can be done in this world if one does not care who gets the credit—how it can set one's life aglow." This is the spirit emphasised by the Gita to be followed in doing good to the society.

Misers are among the most unhappy people in the world. No doubt, they work hard and succeed in amassing huge wealth. But peace of mind will elude them unless they share it with others. It is interesting to note the close connection between miser and misery. Such persons evoke jealousy and envy and hardly command respect in society and even in their own families. Of a miser it has been said that "he has not acquired a fortune but fortune has acquired him."

It has been rightly said that "the avaricious man is good to no one but he is the worst of all to himself." On the other hand, the man who has understood the importance of giving and practises this principle in all sincerity not only gains social respect but also peace of mind.

Incidentally, it is important to realise that peace of mind is most essential for generating creative ideas. All people are potentially creative but few make full use of it. Fresh ideas and insights readily come to those whose minds are at peace and therefore can think coolly and concentrate. These ideas, in turn, help to produce more wealth. Thus, it will be seen that even from a narrow point of view, it pays to give.

## XI

## POWER OF PERSISTENCE

Persistence is one of the most valuable lessons taught by the Gita. The pursuit of peace of mind will become difficult unless one has learnt to master defeat and disappointment. Life is full of problems and they will overwhelm any person if he does not have a positive attitude of thinking and refuses to quit when confronted with impediments. Great men in all walks of life and in all countries had to overcome tremendous obstacles before they could achieve their goals.

Mahatma Gandhi said that "perseverance opens up treasures which give perennial joy." Napoleon Bonaparte observed that "victory belongs to the most persevering." Carlyle remarked that "every noble work is at first impossible." According to Edmund Burke, "by gnawing through a dyke even a rat may drown a nation." Mohammed said that "God is with those who persevere." Shakespeare wrote that "much rain wears the marble."

Calvin Coolidge, a former President of the USA, wrote: "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almos a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'Press On' has solved and always will solve the problems of human race."

The power of persistence is clearly brought out in many passages in the Gita. Arjuna is in a mood of utter despair on the battlefield. He has abandoned his bow and arrow, lost all hope, and is almost in tears. Krishna chides him for his defeatist attitude and asks how and why he has developed distrust in himself and become thoroughly dejected. In a few stirring sentences, Krishna admonishes Arjuna not to lose heart but to pick up courage and fight. In chapter II, verse 2, Krishna tells him : "O Arjuna, how has this

unmanly, shameful and cowardly conduct come to you at this critical hour." The words chosen by Krishna are indeed very powerful, namely, "anāryajustam," "asvargyam" and "akīrtikaram." Literally, "anāryajustam" means conduct unworthy of Aryans whose culture was noted for courage and manliness. By "asvargyam" the Lord means that this kind of behaviour will not lead to heaven and by "akīrtikaram", He implies that it is not consistent with his reputation.

So, Krishna tells him in verse 3 of the chapter : "O Partha, surrender not to impotence. It is unworthy of you, shake off this petty feebleness and awake."

When Krishna finds that the above words do not produce the desired effect, He again tries to inspire him with confidence and courage. He explains to Arjuna the significance of life and death and points out that the "atman" or soul is eternal and constant and that it does not pass away when the body perishes. In chapter 11, verse 37, He says : "Slain, you will reach Heaven and victorious, you will enjoy the earth. Therefore, arise and resolve to fight."

But Arjuna is not easily convinced. He asks Krishna in chapter III, verse 1, why He enjoins on him this "terrible deed" if He considers that the path of understanding is superior to the path of action. He says that the Lord's utterances seem to confuse him and so he appeals to Him to advise specifically how he could attain supreme happiness. However, it requires a great deal of persuasion on the part of Krishna to impress on him the imperative need to fight. The Lord reveals His Iswara form and tells him: "Be not cowed down by fear. Fight, and you win over your enemies in battle."

In several other places also, the Gita clearly brings out the importance of persistence and the need to cultivate this quality. But we should remember that persistence cannot be practised in isolation. For example, a man who has no faith in himself and who has not developed a positive attitude of thinking cannot successfully adopt the principle of persistence. Similarly, a person who allows his mind to be dominated by worries and anxieties will also find it extremely difficult to concentrate on his aim and march on to victory. Persistence

will, of course, lead to peace of mind. At the same time, a peaceful mind helps to generate confidence and creates the conditions which make it easy to persevere.

Napoleon Hill writes as follows about the great power of persistence: "Those who have cultivated the habit of persistence seem to enjoy insurance against failure. No matter how many times they are defeated, they finally arrive up towards the top of the ladder. Sometimes, it appears that there is a hidden Guide whose duty is to test men through all sorts of discouraging experiences. Those who pick themselves up after defeat and keep on trying, arrive; and the world cries 'Bravo! I knew you could do it.' The hidden Guide lets no one enjoy great achievement without passing the persistence test. Those who can't take it simply do not make the grade."

So, whenever we feel despondent and are inclined to abandon our aims we should remind ourselves of Krishna's advice "to stand up" for our rights and fight for causes which we consider to be just. There is hardly anything which is impossible for the person who is really determined to win.

In the next chapter we shall consider what the Gita has to say on the mighty power of the mind.

## XII

## CONTROL OF THE MIND

One of the greatest secrets of achieving peace of mind is to understand the enormous power of positive thinking. Many books have been written on this subject from various angles. But the fact that the Gita has also laid eloquent emphasis on this aspect has not been properly appreciated. In several chapters Krishna points out the imperative need to control one's mind so that concentration can get strengthened and the capacity to achieve big things is enhanced. Arjuna often complains of vacillation and about his inability to think clearly and act boldly. But Krishna admonishes him to control his thoughts, pick up courage and do his duty.

In Chapter II, verse 41, Krishna says that the thoughts of the weak-minded persons are many and endless. In verse 44 He points out that there is no fixity of mind for those who are attached to power and pleasure and whose sense of discrimination has disappeared. In verses 56 to 67 He explains the importance of keeping one's mind unperturbed by adversity as well as by such destructive emotions as anger, fear and excitement of senses. He compares the mind that readily yields to temptation to the ship in the ocean that is tossed about by the gale. On the other hand, the person who keeps his senses firmly under control attains supreme peace.

One of the major reasons why many people fail in their lives and feel miserable is due to their inability to control their thoughts. They have no clear and definite goal and, consequently, they lack concentration and will power. They are unable to stick to one job or vocation and drift aimlessly and thus dissipate their energies. It is not surprising therefore that they feel frustrated and cannot find peace of mind. As Montaigne has said, "The soul which has no fixed purpose in life is lost. To be everywhere is to be nowhere."

But those who have clearly understood the power of positive thinking clearly identify their aims in life, equip them-

selves mentally and physically for their tasks and have little difficulty in realising their aims.

Controlling the mind is, of course, not easy. But it is also not difficult provided one makes sincere and systematic attempts in this direction. In his book, *How To Live On 24 Hours A Day*, Arnold Bennett says that "the control of the thinking machine is perfectly possible," that "without the power to concentrate—that is to say, without the power to dictate to the brain its task and to ensure obedience, true life is impossible," and that "mind control is the first element of a full existence." According to him, the power of concentration will help to cure "half the evils of life especially worry, that miserable, avoidable, shameful disease—worry."

Bob Conklin, in his book, *The Dynamics of Successful Attitudes*, quotes the following to emphasise the supreme importance of controlling one's thoughts :

"I can make you rise or fall. I can work for you or against you. I can make you success or failure.

I control the way that you feel and the way that you act.

I can make you laugh.... work .... love. I can make your hearts sing with joy.... excitement .... elation.

Or I can make you wretched, dejected.... morbid. I can make you sick .... listless.

I can be as shackle .... heavy ....attached .... burdensome.

Or I can be as the prism's hue .... dancing .... bright ....fleeting .... lost for ever unless captured by pen or purpose.

I can be nurtured and grown to be great and beautiful .... seen by the eyes of others through action in you.

I can never be removed ....only replaced.

I am a thought.

Why not know me better ?"

The teachings of the Gita, correctly understood and practised with persistence, do help one to regulate one's thoughts, master tension, and achieve inner calm.

In Chapter IV Krishna speaks about the importance of acquiring wisdom by controlling one's senses. In verse 38 He says that in this world there is nothing equal to wisdom which is obtained by constant concentration. Faith is essential for achieving this objective. The man who has no faith and who is full of doubts cannot attain happiness either here or in the world beyond. But the man of wisdom should have humility. In Chapter V, verse 18, Krishna says that the saints do not make distinctions between learned and humble brahmins and a cow, an elephant, a dog, and an outcaste. He points out that learning breeds modesty—*vidyāvinayasampanne*.

The world of knowledge is already vast and, with the rapid advance in science and technology, its frontiers are becoming steadily extended. Lala Har Dayal wrote in 1934 in his book, *Hints for Self-Culture*: "Life itself is short, far too short, for the lover of knowledge. If you had the gift of immortality like Tithonus, and also unfading youth, then you would surely devote a hundred years to the study of astronomy, a hundred years to biology, a hundred years to history, and so on, until you call yourself a well educated man or woman. But alas ! our life is reckoned in months and years, not in centuries and millennia. We are old before we have discovered that we know very little indeed. Make haste to learn." Since Har Dayal wrote these words, the world has made astonishing progress in many directions and the boundaries of our knowledge have immensely been enlarged and this trend, of course, will continue to persist. In this context, the acquisition of knowledge assumes greater importance than ever before. But at the same time it is necessary to avoid pride and vanity and observe modesty. It is actually those who are not truly educated who become arrogant about their learning. As Sophocles says : "If any man thinks that he alone is wise—that in speech or in mind he hath no peer, such a soul, when laid open, is ever found empty."

The vital importance of concentration is again emphasised in Chapter XVIII where Krishna refers to the three kinds of steadiness. In verse 33 He points out that the unflinching firmness by which, through concentration, one restrains the activity of the mind, the life-breaths and the sense organs is pure or *sattviki*. On the other hand, that steadiness is passionate or *rajasi*, by which one sticks to the fruits of action, power, and pelf, while the steadiness by which one does not abandon fear, grief, despair, vanity and sloth is dull or dark, that is *tamasi*.

The great achievers of the world have always been men of tremendous powers of concentration. When Sir Isaac Newton was complimented on his genius, he remarked that his success was more due to his patient attention than to any other factor. Buffon said that "genius is no more than great patience." According to Helvetius, "genius is duly prolonged attention." Thomas Carlyle said : "The weakest creature, by concentrating his powers on a single object, can accomplish something, whereas the strongest, by dispensing his over many, may fail to accomplish anything." Charles Dickens wrote : "The one serviceable, safe, certain, remunerative, attainable quality in every study and pursuit is that of attention. My own imagination would never have served me as it did but for the habit of humble, daily, toiling attention."

The power of concentration gets greatly strengthened by regular practice. It depends, of course, on the amount of interest that one has in one's subject. Neither education nor hard work by itself will be of much use unless one clearly understands the potential power of one's mind and makes the best use of it.

Ardia Whitman warns not to run away from "the adventures of the mind which you find hard to understand." He gives the following sound advice : "Keep an open mind for the things 'practical' which people say won't work. Perhaps, we have more 'senses' than we think. For thousands of years, electricity was all around us and we could not use it. How can we be sure there are not powers of the mind

which we understand as little but could as well if we know how."

A proper understanding of the essence of the Gita will help to become aware of one's latent powers and how to make the best use of them for one's own good as well as that of the society. As Swami Chidbhavananda has said, "the study and practice of the tenets of the *Bhagavad Gita* transforms an ordinary man into a superman, without coming into clash with any creed of theology."

## XIII

## ENERGY UNLIMITED

A common complaint of most people all over the world today is about the lack of energy. They easily feel tired, bored, and frustrated, and are unable to concentrate even on their daily duties of a routine nature. Such people can hardly generate the interest and enthusiasm which are necessary for achieving their life's ambitions. Medical science can do little to change the situation. But, by adopting an attitude of faith and optimism, and by constant practice of the fundamental principles of religion, it should be possible to acquire enormous and continuous energy.

William James, the eminent American philosopher, has said : "Most of us may learn to live in perfect comfort on higher levels of power. Every one knows that on any given day there are energies slumbering in him which the incitements of that day do not call forth. Compared with what we ought to be, we are only half-awake. Our fires are damped, our drafts are checked. We are making use of only a small part of our possible mental and physical resources." The Bible contains several passages which suggest ideas of health and strength and many people look up to it for getting inspiration to acquire a vigorous personality. The Bible says : "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, not faint." Again, the Bible says: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength." This idea is repeated in the following sentences: "In Him we live, and move," "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

The Gita also has enunciated many salutary principles and techniques which are designed to ward off defeatist thoughts and build up a great reservoir of energy. In almost every chapter, suggestions abound for avoiding such emotions as resentment, fear, anger, lust and greed. Keeping these

under control should be of considerable help in developing one's latent powers, both physical and mental. The emphasis on moderation in eating, sleeping and recreation and on the choice of food, which gives vitality, is also meant to provide a flow of constant energy.

In a previous chapter, we dealt with the importance of prayer for achieving peace of mind and briefly pointed out that prayer is also a tremendous source of energy. But it should, of course, be used with dedication and discipline. Prayers which are offered in a superficial and indifferent manner are unlikely to produce energy. But if the technique is correctly understood and applied, it can certainly give immense energy.

According to Smiley Blanton : "In prayer, whatever the creed or denomination, one accepts the concept of a Creator who is the source of life and to whom one can turn in humility and trust. Here again the surrender of self is the indispensable attitude. 'Not my will but Thine be done.' When this attitude is truly dominant, the results can be astonishing. Whatever you choose to call it, mobilising the unconscious or making contact with God, prayer is a channel through which enormous power can flow."

In several passages in the Gita, Krishna says that He is in every one of us and, with deep faith in Him, it should be possible to strengthen one's sources of physical and mental energy. In Chapter VII, verse 11, He describes Himself as "the strength of the strong."

In Chapter XV, verse 13, He points out that He supports all beings with His energy and in the next verse He says that "I am seated in the hearts of all." Arjuna refers to Him as being boundless in power and measureless in strength. It is therefore upto every one of us to realise the true nature of God and to derive all the energy we need from Him through prayer and meditation.

The Gita tells us about the importance of meditation and this is one of the effective methods for developing a vigorous personality. If some people have been unable to find strength

and peace of mind from meditation it is because they have not practised it with faith and sincerity. In his book, *The Quiet Mind* (published by Rider & Co. London), John E. Coleman says: "The fruits of meditation, when it is truly achieved, give one a new lease of life, redouble an individual's capacity for vigorous and creative actions by the pursuit of pleasure or the evasion of pain and indeed promote the full enjoyment of life with all its good and bad, its beauty and ugliness. It permits one to act instead of constantly reacting. It frees the mind from the eternal conflict of the opposites. Even more it enhances one's feelings of compassion so that this freedom cannot be used to the detriment of others and that alone is no small virtue in today's environments."

Coleman quotes the example of U Ba Khin, a teacher of a meditation centre in Burma, who held several top positions in the Government and points out that "his output of work could hardly be matched by twenty good men." Coleman says : "For an elderly man—and he was in his seventies, when I met him—he was a powerhouse of dynamic energy, sleeping only a few hours each day and dividing his time between Government duties and his work at the meditation centre. Here indeed, I thought, was a man who set a clear example that the teachings of the Buddha had something extraordinary to offer."

Arjuna asks Krishna how he can know Him by constant meditation and the Lord says : "Fix your thoughts only on Me. Let your thinking dwell in Me." Again, He says : "Fixing your mind on Me, you will, by my Grace, overcome all impediments."

By emphasising the importance of meditation the Gita tells us about the secrets of acquiring energy. When the mind is calm and quiet, it helps to facilitate a steady flow of dynamic energy. Meister Eckhart says : "To the quiet mind all things are possible. What is a quiet mind ? A quiet mind is one which nothing weighs on, nothing worries, which, free from ties and from all self-seeking, is wholly merged into the will of God and dead as to its own. Such a one can do no deed however small but it is clothed with something of

God's power and authority." Robert Louis Stevenson says that : "Quiet minds cannot be perplexed or frightened but go on in fortune or misfortune at their own private pace, like a clock in a thunderstorm."

The practice of silence is an effective way of renewing one's energy. In several places in the Gita, the importance of silence and solitude is clearly highlighted. According to Aldous Huxley, "silence is as full of potential wisdom and wit as the unhewn marble of great sculpture." Owen Meredith says : "There are moments when silence, prolonged and unbroken, is more expressive than all the words ever spoken."

Carlyle wrote that "silence is more eloquent than words." According to W. S. Landor, "solitude is the audience chamber of God," while Aldous Huxley says that "the more powerful and original a mind, the more it will incline towards the religion of solitude."

It is clear therefore that the extent to which we are able to feel and act energetically will depend largely not merely on our physical condition but on our mental attitude. The more acutely we become aware of our potential strength, the more confidence we can develop and thereby get rid of inferiority complex and other traits which distort our personality and disturb our peace of mind. This lesson is again and again emphasised in many chapters of the Gita and a proper understanding of its significance is of great importance in acquiring unlimited energy and enthusiasm.

To quote Smiley Blanton again : "Each of us has, in his unconscious mind, power and strength and courage past all imagining. Sometimes we fail to use this strength because we don't know it is there. Sometimes we delude ourselves into thinking we don't need it. Sometimes we block it with fear or guilt or tension. But it is most assuredly there."

After reading the Gita with reverence and attention, can there be any doubt about the existence of the immense energy that the Creator has placed in all of us ?

## XIV

## THE TRUTH ABOUT DEATH

Fear of death is one of the major factors which deeply affect the peace of mind of many people. Every one knows that death is certain. But few seem to be clearly aware of its real nature and significance. A verse in the Mahabharata says that there is nothing more surprising in this world than the fact that while everyday some people go to the abode of Yama, the others think that they can live for ever.

This idea is also expressed by Freud. He says : "Whenever we make the attempt to imagine it we can perceive that we really survive as spectators. Hence the psychoanalytic school could venture on the assertion that at bottom no one believes in his own death or, to put the same thing in another way, in the unconscious everyone of us is convinced of his own immortality."

The Gita tells us that death, after all, need not frighten us and that, rightly understood, it can be faced with equanimity. In many chapters, Krishna speaks about the inevitability of death. He explains, however, that it is only the body that dies but not the soul. When Arjuna says in Chapter II that he is utterly confused and dejected at the thought of killing one's own kinsmen, Krishna admonishes him by saying that he is grieving for those who should not be grieved for. Yet, he speaks words of wisdom. The Lord says that the wise do not grieve either for the living or for the dead. He points out that just as the soul in the body passes through childhood, youth and old age, it also passes on into another body. But this process does not affect or disturb the wise men. The soul or **atman** is never born nor does it die. It is eternal, unborn and constant. It does not die with the body. Krishna therefore asks Arjuna how can one, who recognises **atman** as permanent and indestructible, kill anybody or cause anyone to kill ? The Lord gives the example of a man who casts off his worn-out garments and puts on

new ones and says that, in the same way, the soul also discards the old body and enters into a new one. These ideas are expressed in the following verses in chapter II :

aśocyān anvaśocas tvaṁ
prajnāvādāmś ca bhāsase
gatāsūn agatāsūms ca
nā 'nuśocanti panditāḥ
dehino 'smin yathā dehe
kaumāraṁ yauvanam jarā
tathā dehāntaraprāptir
dhirās tatra na muhyati
na jāyate mriyate vā kadācin
nā 'yam bhūtva bhavitā vā na bhūyaḥ
ajo nityah śāsvato 'yaṁ purāno
na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre
vedā 'vināśinaṁ nityaṁ
ya enam ajam avyayam
katham sa puruṣaḥ pārtha
kaṁ ghātayati hanti kam
vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhnāti naro 'parāni
tathā śarīrani vihāya jīrnān-
anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī

In another significant passage in the same chapter, Krishna speaks about the inevitability of death and the futility of grieving over something which cannot be avoided. In the following verse He points out that death is certain to the one which is born and birth is equally certain to the one which is dead. Therefore, one should not bemoan over what is unavoidable :

jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur
dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca
tasmād aparihārye 'rthe
na tvam śocitum arhasi

Many famous psychologists and men of great achievements have also emphasised the need to cooperate with the inevitable as an effective strategy to banish worry and attain

peace of mind. Dale Carnegie says in his book, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, that he had interviewed a large number of prominent businessmen in the USA to ascertain their opinion as to how they could lead lives free from worry, and the reply he got was that it was their habit not to fret over what was inevitable that helped them to achieve serenity of mind.

According to Carnegie, "the best single bit of advice about worry," which he had ever discovered in all his reading, could be summed up in the following prayer written by Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, Professor of Applied Christianity, Union Theological Seminary of New York :

"God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference."

This is, of course, sound advice. But, in following it, one has to use one's discretion. What is meant by inevitability ? Ideas about inevitability have changed in the course of history and will continue to change. For example, many serious epidemics and other diseases were at one time looked upon with great horror because they could not be controlled or cured. Infantile mortality was widespread in many countries until a few decades ago and many thought that it was inevitable. But because of the rapid and remarkable advance in medical science many deadly diseases have become curable and several epidemics have been wiped out. Indeed, some scientists are even thinking of the possibility of defeating and delaying the ageing process almost indefinitely.

Dr. Vladimir Negovsky, an eminent Russian doctor, who is the Head of the Department of Reanimatology in Moscow, has said that most people die because of "mechanical breakdowns" which could be cured. He has been able to prolong the critical period of clinical deaths from the average time of 6 minutes to 10 or 15 minutes and he expects to lengthen this period to two or three hours by lowering body temperatures. He has expressed the view that the normal human

life-span should be about 150 years and that life-saving techniques can bring this goal nearer.

Dr. Negovsky has been conducting research in this field for over 40 years and he has claimed that thousands of people have been able to survive accidents and other complications by applying his methods. Writing in the journal *Problems of Philosophy*, he has said : "Our studies show that death is not as mysterious as we had thought. Death is a biological phenomenon just like many other such phenomena. You can study it in detail and learn how to reverse the process." He has remarked that "biological studies show that a man should live about 150 years. But along the way something breaks down, something stops working, and death sets in." The economic, social, and psychological implications of this development are being examined carefully by scientists and others. Meanwhile, we can take comfort from the fact that death, though it is bound to come ultimately, need not be the frightening thing that it is supposed to be.

The Gita helps us to understand death in the proper perspective so that we may face the event when it comes with courage and confidence. Great men all over the world have emphasised the fact that the fear of death is unnatural and unnecessary. Mahatma Gandhi wrote that "it is because we fear death so much for ourselves that we shed tears over the death of others." He observed that "to be afraid of death is like being afraid of discarding an old worn-out garment." According to Lucam, "the gods conceal from men the happiness of death so that they may endure life." Henry Jackson Van Dyke said that "some people are so afraid to die that they never begin to live."

Montaigne has brought out the apparent similarity between sleep and death and has argued that nature has so devised sleep as to create in man the fearlessness about death. He has said that "perhaps, the faculty of sleep, which deprives us of all action and all feelings, might seem useless and contrary to nature, were it not that thereby nature teaches us that she has made us for dying and living alike, and from start of life, presents to us the eternal state that she reserves for us

after we die, to accustom us to it and take away our fear of it."

An effective technique to acquire courage in one's last moments is to control one's mind and to think only of God. In chapter VII Krishna says that whoever takes refuge in Him and seeks deliverance from decay and death, fully realises the "Eternal, the self-knowledge, and all about action or *karma*." Besides, such persons, who know that God rules over the material and divine life and have their minds in harmony, think of Him even at the time of their death. These ideas are explained in verses 29 and 30 given below :

jarāmaranamoksāya
    mām āśritya yatanti ye
te brahma tad viduḥ krishnam
    adhyātmaṁ karma cā 'khilam
sādhibhūtādhidaivaṁ māṁ
    sādhiyajnām ca ye viduḥ
prayānakāle 'pi ca māṁ
    te vidur yuktacetasah

In chapter VIII, verses 9 and 10, Krishna clearly explains that whoever meditates on Him with concentration at the time of his death and with his life-force (*prana*) fixed on the centre of the eyebrows, attains supreme peace :

kavim purānam anuśāsitāram
    aṇor anīyāṁsam anusmared yaḥ
sarvasya dhātāram acintyarūpam
    ādityavarṇam tamasaḥ parastāt
prayānakale manasā 'calena
    bhaktyā yukto yogabalena cai 'va
bhruvor madhye prānam āveśya samyak
    sa taṁ paraṁ puruṣaṁ upaiti divyam

Dr. Annie Besant has translated these verses as follows : "He who thinketh upon the Ancient, the Omniscient, the All-Ruler, minuter than the minute, the supporter of all, of form unimaginable, refulgent as the sun beyond the darkness; In the time of forthgoing, with unshaken mind, fixed in devotion, by the power of Yoga drawing together his life-breath in the

centre of two eyebrows, he goeth to the Spirit, supreme, divine." Commenting on these verses, Dr. Radhakrishnan has pointed out that the ability to fix the entire life-force in the middle of the eyebrows is possible only for those who choose the time of death by their yogic power. This is true but we need not take its meaning in the literal sense. Surely, even those who think of God in their own way at the time of their death will be able to attain His blessings. This will become clear from verse 13 of the same chapter which is as follows :

aum ity ekākṣaraṁ brahma
vyāharan mām anusmaran
yah prayāti tyajan dehaṁ
sa yāti paramām gatim

In the above verse the Lord has clarified that whoever remembers Him as he departs and utters the single syllable *Aum* reaches the supreme goal.

In this context, it is important to remember that our last words will be generally influenced by the kind of life we have led and the thoughts which have dominated our minds. Those who have lived with constant thoughts of God and devoted their time and talent for the welfare of the society are bound to depart from the world with a peace of mind, which is not possible for others. As Edward S. Le Comte has said in his book *Dictionary of Last Words**: "Men's expectations in regard to dying words have been influenced by whether they themselves were preoccupied with this world or the next. In the latter case, there was a hope for some intuition, some confirmation of faith, some interpretable vision from the hoverer between time and eternity. In the other case, that last flash of character or final summary might not be forthcoming. Listening at a death-bed is not necessarily morbid. It is a visit at a cave of possible wisdom or, at any rate, the turning of an additional psychological light." According to Walter Whitman, "Last words are not samples of the best, which involve vitality at its full, and balance, and perfect control and scope. But they

* *Dictionary of Last Words*, compiled by Edward S. Le Comte Columbia University Philosophical Library, New York.

are valuable beyond measure to confirm and endorse the varied facts, theories and faith of the whole preceding life."

The Christian religion also emphasises the fact that there is life beyond death. Georgia Harkness says: "It is the Christian hope that to life, lived in the presence of God, death is but the entrance into a larger life. It is the Christian hope that in the larger fellowship of God's sons for time and eternity there is no final separation from those we love. It is the Christian hope that whether death comes early or late, no life is fruitless, no personality prized by God as an infinitely precious creation is snuffed out like a candle in the dark. It is the Christian hope that if atomic or bacteriological warfare or a hydrogen bomb should cause life upon the planet to end in mutual destruction, God would not be ultimately defeated or his Kingdom destroyed. It is the Christian hope that Christ is the resurrection of life, and that neither life nor death can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Deep faith in religion and in God gives one this strength to overcome grief in a normal and natural manner. If the significance of death is correctly appreciated, the reaction to it also becomes rational and realistic. John Sutherland Bonnel has pointed out that "it is totally a wrong idea that we ought to be stoic and completely unemotional in the face of death. Nature should be allowed to have its way. The Lord gave us lachrymal glands so that we may use them, and the flow of tears is healing to the spirit."

Eminent scientists also have expressed their belief in immortality. Dr. Wernher Von Braun, space physicist, has said : "Many people seem to feel that science has somehow made 'religious ideas' untimely or old fashioned. But I think science has a real surprise for the skeptics. Science, for instance, tells us that nothing in nature, not even the tiniest particle, can disappear without a trace. Nature does not know extinction. All it knows is transformation. Now, if God applies this fundamental principle to the most minute and insignificant parts of His Universe, doesn't it make sense to assume that He applies it also to the human soul ? Every-

thing science has taught me—and continues to teach me—strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death. Nothing disappears without a trace."

Consider, in this context, the reaction of Ayatullah Khomeini, who took over the administration of Iran after the expulsion of the Shah, to the death of his daughter. *Time* magazine wrote in the issue of 16th July 1979 : "When asked to define the essential character of Ayatullah Khomeini, a family friend recalls the scene at the drowning of Khomeini's infant daughter in Qom some 35 years ago. Khomeini's wife was tearing her hair in despair. When the friend arrived, the bearded savant was praying quietly over the body of the youngest of his six children. 'I looked into his face and could see no trace of disturbance,' says the friend today. 'I knew he loved the child very deeply. Yet he showed no emotion, no sorrow, no excitement.' After a while, Khomeini said quietly : 'God gave me the child, now He has taken her back.' Then he resumed his prayers. Remembers the friend : 'He expressed no grief or turmoil, for he believes that God is ever beside him.'"

There are numerous other examples of men and women who have displayed remarkable coolness on occasions of bereavement. Some brave men have even cheerfully prepared themselves for death and drawn up in meticulous detail as to how their last rites are to be conducted. For instance, Lord Mountbatten who was killed in a bomb blast in his 79th year, in August 1979, had instructed the B.B.C. about his obituary and had also frankly stated what he thought about his passing away in due course. He had observed, according to the *Listener*, London : "I said I would prefer not to be burnt or buried here at sea. I 'd really just like to be buried here, in my home town of Romsey, and how they do it is entirely the decision of the authorities. I'm ready to go along with anything they do. The only thing I hope is that it will be a happy occasion."

Mountbatten added : "I think it's an awful thing to be sad at funerals. I hope they won't cry : they must remember that all my life I've enjoyed a joke. I 've enjoyed the

fun of life, and I'm only sorry I won't be there to see the fun of funeral."

The last Viceroy of India concluded his note with the following brave words: "But now I've' come to the end of my useful life, and there is no point in remaining alive for ever, merely becoming a burden to people. So I don't mind now, really, when it comes, as long as it's a reasonably peaceful and a satisfying sort of death."

Most people can certainly look forward to die in peace if they condition their minds by thoughts of God, as emphasised in the Gita. Premature death, of course, is sad. But what is premature death? Cicero wrote: "Let us get rid of such old wives' tales as the one that tells us it is tragic to die before one's time. What 'time' is that I would like to know. Nature is the one who has granted us the loan of our lives without setting any schedule for repayment. What has one to complain of it if she calls in the loan when she will ?"

Joseph Jefferson said: "We are all but tenants and shortly the great Landlord will give us notice that our lease has expired."

With the advance of medical science and the improvement of longevity, our concepts of premature death will change. Even so, a clear knowledge about the mystery of life and death, as expounded in the Gita, will give one the strength and the courage to face the realities of the world. As Rabindranath Tagore said, "death is not extinguishing the light. It is only putting out the lamp because the Dawn has come."

## XV

## GITA IS FOR EVER

Norman Vincent Peale, whose views on certain aspects of religion have been quoted in the preceding chapters, is one of the most dynamic leaders of Christian thought. He is the President and co-founder of the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry and is the author of over 20 best-selling books, including the *Power of Positive Thinking*, which has sold more than three million copies. The present writer has greatly admired Peale's erudition, enthusiasm, and his imaginative approach to solve the problems of modern man in the context of the principles taught by Jesus Christ. But Peale does not seem to realise that the other great religions of the world have also a good deal to offer to develop one's personality and achieve peace of mind. For instance, he often refers to the Bible as "*the* greatest book in the world." He has said that "the most vital, creative and positive thoughts are those stated in the Bible."

Dr. Smiley Banton has observed : "It does seem foolish not to make use of the distilled wisdom of 3000 years. Centuries before psychiatry, the Bible knew that 'the kingdom of God is within you.' We, psychiatrists, call it the unconscious mind—but only the words are new, not the concept. From the beginning to end the Bible teaches that the human soul is a battleground where good struggles with the evil. We talk about the forces of hostility and aggression contending with the love-impulses in human nature. It is the same thing."

It is, of course, true that the Bible has been a source of tremendous inspiration to millions of people all over the world. But can it be described as *the* greatest book of the world ? Does not the Gita also contain words of eternal wisdom which continue to give spiritual satisfaction and clear guidance to regulate our lives even in these hectic times ?

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, an eminent Sanskrit scholar, and one of the builders of the Indian National

Congress, wrote about the Gita as follows: "I believe that in all the living languages of the world, there is no book so full of true knowledge, the purest love and the most luminous action. It teaches self-control, the threefold austerities, non-violence, truth, compassion, obedience to the call of duty for the sake of duty, and putting up a fight against unrighteousness or Adharma. To my knowledge, there is no book in the whole range of the world's literature so high above all as the *Bhagavad Gita*, which is a treasure-house of Dharma not only for Hindus but for all mankind."

The fact however is that both the Bible and the Gita do contain words of profound wisdom and provide codes of conduct which remain as valid today as ever.

But unfortunately the fundamental principles of Hinduism are not being propagated and practised in a manner which would readily appeal to the common man. In the books and lectures on the Gita, it is seldom explained that it does contain sound advice and practical suggestions which will help the citizen of today in dealing with his personal problems and in achieving strength of body and peace of mind.

In his book, *The New Art of Living*, Peale speaks about people who, even though they know of the power of real Christianity, refuse to allow it to influence their lives. He says : "Of course, I realise that much of Christianity as preached and practised fails to reveal this power. It has been a lifeless thing of creed and ceremony, and stereotyped jargon and allowed to be considered a system of social ethics only. Christianity is not a creed to be recited but a power to be tapped. Nor is it only a social bill of rights although it is that in every sense of the phrase. The important thing to be emphasised is that it is a source of inward power by which weak personalities can become strong; divided personalities can become unified; hurt minds can be healed; and the secret of peace and poise attained."

Peale's criticism of the practice of Christianity seems to be valid in regard to the Hindu religion as well. In recent years, there has been a remarkable revival of interest in the Hindu religion both in India and in many countries of the

world. Even people in the most affluent countries have come to realise that the great doctrines of Hinduism have much to offer by way of solace and comfort and can provide them with the power to deal with their problems and brighten their lives.

It is interesting to see that many of the researches conducted by the modern universities on various aspects of health and disease merely confirm what has been described in the ancient Hindu scriptures regarding the interaction of mind and body. For example, *Newsweek*, in its issue of August 13, 1979, refers to a study by psychiatrists, Dr. Barbara Betz and Dr. B Caroline Thomas, at John Hopkins Medical School. They selected 45 students and divided them into three temperamental categories; the "alphas" who were slow and steady, the "betas" who were active and energetic, and the "gammas" who, though competent, were easily upset, and had generally a low opinion of themselves. These researches revealed that while only 25% of the "alphas" and 26.7% of the "betas" suffered major disorders, this percentage in the case of "gammas" was as high as 77.3%.

*Newsweek* reported as follows : "Betz and Thomas believe that temperament has a biological basis. It is the reflection, they say, of individual neurological and hormonal activity. Betz thinks temperament may be the most important factor contributing to the development of illness. 'It is the underlying care of the self,' she believes. "Because 'gammas' are close to their own juices and feelings, they may experience more wear and tear, and more vulnerability to the stress and disease."

But, with due respect to these distinguished researchers and their teams, it should be pointed out that their findings can hardly come as a surprise or revelation to those who have closely practised the principles laid down in the Gita. We have seen that, in many chapters, Krishna stresses on the imperative need to avoid those emotions which erode our happiness and wreck our bodies. The importance of moderation is emphasised so that body and mind can develop in such a way as to strengthen each other and develop into a harmonious personality.

Mahatma Gandhi referred to the Gita as "the universal mother whose door is wide open to anyone who knocks." He observed that a true votary of the Gita was immune to defeat and disappointment and that "he ever dwells in perennial joy and peace that passeth understanding." But he clarified that "peace and joy come not to the sceptic or to him who is proud of his intellect or learning" and that "it is reserved only for the humble in spirit who brings to her worship a fullness of faith and an undivided singleness of mind."

According to Sri Aurobindo, "the Gita is a book that has worn extraordinarily well, and it is almost as fresh and still in its real substance quite as new, because always renewable in experience, as when it first appeared in or was written into the frame of the Mahabharata."

In the next chapter, we shall examine the relevance of the Gita for promoting peace in the world.

## XVI

## PEACE OF MIND FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD

The fundamental teachings of the Gita are of considerable relevance not only for achieving peace of mind for the individual but also from the point of view of promoting the cause of world peace. The statesmen of the world have been talking for the past many years about a new international economic order but the prospect of realising this goal remains as distant as ever.

In a speech at the University of Chicago on May 22, 1979, Mr. Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, revealed that "there are today more than one billion human beings in the developing countries whose incomes per head have nearly stagnated over the past decade. In statistical terms, and in constant prices, they have risen only about two dollars a year: from $130 in 1965 to $150 in 1975." He added: "But what is beyond the power of any set of statistics to illustrate is the inhuman degradation the vast majority of these individuals are condemned to because of poverty. Malnutrition saps their energy, stunts their bodies, and shortens their lives. Illiteracy darkens their minds and forecloses their futures. Preventable diseases maim and kill their children. Squalor and ugliness pollute and poison their surroundings." Mr. McNamara declared that "the miraculous gift of life itself, and all its intrinsic potential—so promising and rewarding for us—is eroded and reduced for them to a desperate effort to survive."

But all this poverty and suffering are unnecessary. The Gita says in chapter VI (verse 5): "Let a man lift himself up by his own efforts." How true is this statement in respect of nations as well ?

The United Nations Organisation was founded in 1945 with a view to preventing wars and promoting better understanding and closer cooperation among the nations of the world. It is, of course, true that the UNO has many positive

achievements to its credit but how far has it really succeeded in laying firmly the foundations of a new world order based on justice and equality ? The gaps between the rich and the poor nations, far from being narrowed, are actually becoming wider and deeper and economic experts have forecast that, by the end of the present century, millions of people in many countries will continue to live in absolute and abject poverty.

One of the basic causes for this gloomy outlook lies in the failure of the citizens of the world to understand and appreciate correctly the spiritual truths of the great religions which emphasise the vital role of tolerance, justice and generosity. Henry Cabot Lodge, the Chief U. S. delegate to the U.N.O., in a letter that he wrote to each member on December 30, 1956, said: "I propose that God should be openly and audibly invoked at the United Nations in accordance with any of the religious faiths which are represented here. I do so in accordance with the conviction that we cannot make the UNO into a successful instrument of God's peace without God's help and that with His help we cannot fail." But the decisions and discussions of the UNO have failed to make the kind of impact which was expected when it was founded.

The rich nations have shown a disinclination to share their wealth willingly and generously with the poor nations. Take, for instance, the performance of the United States, which has the world's largest gross national product, in providing assistance to the developing nations. In 1949 the U.S. official Development Assistance amounted to 2.79% of the gross national product. But in 1979, it amounted to only 0.22%. During this period the income of the average U. S. citizen more than doubled after adjustment for inflation.

But are the Americans really happier today than before because of their higher income and better living standards ? Do they actually enjoy peace of mind ? *Time* magazine disclosed, in its issue of September 17, 1979, that New York city annually had 1550 murders, 3500 rapes, 76,000 robberies, and 161,000 burglaries, apart from unreported crime.

President Jimmy Carter's speech on national television on 15th July 1979 contained a sad revelation of the deep crisis of the spirit of the American people. He regretted that American citizens were losing faith in themselves and in their Government. He made these significant remarks : "In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence of consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does but by what one owns. But we have discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We have learnt that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose."

What the Americans have now discovered about the futility of mere accumulation of wealth was clearly realised by India's sages and savants several thousands of years ago. The Gita has emphasised in Chapter XVII the importance of sharing one's wealth with his fellow-men and this has to be done in a discriminating manner. We have seen in a preceding chapter how the art of giving away one's wealth for the benefit of the society does contribute to one's mental peace and happiness. This principle remains true in respect of the nations also. The new international economic order cannot be achieved so long as the wealthy nations do not show a greater willingness to part with their resources and adjust their trading policies so as to enable the developing countries to achieve a faster rate of growth.

President Eisenhower once said that "peace and justice are two sides of the same coin." Real peace can come only from the hearts of men. It has been rightly remarked that "peace is not the absence of conflict in life but the ability to cope with it." In this context, the lessons of the Gita assume great significance since they do help us to deal creatively and effectively with the problems and challenges in life. Therefore, in our quest for permanent peace in the world, we have to see that men and women everywhere are imbued with the principles of tolerance, justice and fair play which are so eloquently emphasised in the Gita.

As Mr. Robert McNamara has said, "the whole of human history has recognised the principle that the rich and powerful have a moral obligation to assist the poor and the weak. That is what the sense of community is all about—any community: the community of the family, the community of the nation, the community of nations itself." He has observed that "moral principles are also practical ways to proceed" and that social justice is not "an abstract ideal, but a sensible way of making life more livable."

George Marshall, a former Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army, once said that "if a man does find the solution for world peace it will be the most revolutionary reversal of his record we have ever known." The solution for world peace was discovered long ago by the great seers of our country. But the real difficulty lies in applying it in the relations between nations. As Dr. Annie Besant wrote in her preface to her book on the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Thus the teachings of the ancient battlefield give guidance in all later days, and train the aspiring soul in treading the steep and thorny path that leads to peace. To all such souls in East and West come these divine lessons, for the path is one, though it has many names, and all souls seek the same goal, though they may not realise their unity."

Shri Aurobindo Ghose observed that the ideas of the Gita were "a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and culture." He said that "outside India too it is universally acknowledged as one of the world's great scriptures although in Europe its thought is better understood than its secret of spiritual practice."

The need for a proper understanding of the role of the Gita in contributing to our peace of mind as well as peace in the world has assumed greater urgency and importance at present when there is so much talk about a new world order.

## XVII

## WORDS AND VERSES OF WISDOM

Writing in *Young India* in 1925, Mahatma Gandhi explained how he used the Gita not only to obtain peace of mind but also to find solutions to his problems. He said: "I find solace in the *Bhagavad Gita* that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. When disappointment stares me in the face and, all alone I see not a ray of light, I go back to the *Bhagavad Gita.* I find a verse here and a verse there and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies—and my life has been full of external tragedies—and if they have left no visible, no indelible scar on me, I owe it all to the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita.*"

Many other eminent persons both in India and abroad have also found in the study of the Gita a powerful source of inspiration as well as a constant guide to solve their personal problems and achieve mental peace. It is interesting to find that the great books of other religions also have helped their followers to avoid tension and realise harmony and happiness.

For example, Norman Vincent Peale says: "The words of the Bible have a particularly strong therapeutic value. Drop them into your mind, allowing them to dissolve in consciousness, and they will spread a healing balm over your entire mental structure. This is one of the simplest processes to perform and also one of the most effective in attaining peace of mind."

In this chapter, therefore, we have given certain verses from the Gita which, if correctly understood and assimilated, should help one to ward off defeatist thoughts and other emotions which affect our physical and mental health.

**The Power Within You** *II* (3)

klaibyaṁ mā sma gamaḥ pārtha
nai 'tat tvayy upapādyate
kṣudram hṛdayadaurbalyaṁ
tyaktvo 'ttiṣṭha paraṁtapa

O Partha, do not yield to weakness. It is unbecoming of you. Get rid of this feeble-heartedness. O, vanquisher of foes, wake up!

In the above verse, Krishna tells Arjuna that indecision and imbecility are unworthy of a great warrior like him, the hero of a hundred battles. The Lord advises him to stand up and fight bravely. Many people go through life in misery and unhappiness because they do not realise their potential power and readily succumb even to minor impediments.

Booker T. Washington wrote that "success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." Success however comes only to those who have confidence in themselves and are willing to fight for their goals.

Consider, in this context, the inspiring words of Theodore Roosevelt: "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in worthy causes; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievements; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly; so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

**Action And Its Fruits** *II*(47)

Karmaṇy evā 'dhikaras te
mā phaleṣu kadācana
mā karmaphalahetur bhūr
mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi

Your concern should be only with action, never with its results. Let not the fruit of action motivate you nor be attached to inaction.

In this verse the Lord cautions against being too much concerned with the fruits of one's actions. We often fail to achieve mental peace because we allow ourselves to be unduly

influenced by the results of our actions. We become tense, worried, and full of anxiety because we are not sure as to whether we shall succeed in our endeavours. On the other hand, we should do our very best in whatever task we undertake and hope for the best results. As we have explained in a previous chapter, this verse is often misunderstood to mean that it advocates indifference to results. But, in fact, it provides the clue to success by helping to create the right frame of mind for action.

**Senses Under Control** *II(64-67)*

rāgadveṣaviyuktais tu
viṣayān indriyaiś caran
ātmavaśyair vidheyātmā
prasādam adhigacchati

The self-controlled man, moving among objects by disciplining his senses and free from attraction and repulsion, gains peace of mind.

prasāde sarvaduḥkhānāṁ
hānir asyo 'pajāyate
prasannacetaso hy āśu
buddhiḥ paryavatiṣṭhate

In that peaceful state all sorrow is destroyed because the intellect of the man of peace soon becomes steady.

nā 'sti buddhir ayuktasya
nā cā 'yuktasya bhāvanā
na cā bhāvayataḥ śāntir
aśāntasya kutaḥ sukham

For the man of unsteady mind there is no wisdom nor has he concentration. For him who has no concentration there is no peace. And how can he, devoid of peace, enjoy happiness?

indriyānaṁ hi caratāṁ
yan mano 'nuvidhīyate
tad asya harati prajñām
vayur nāvam ivā'mbhasi

Just as the wind carries away a ship on the waters, the mind which yields to the wandering senses takes away his discrimination.

In these verses Krishna speaks about the vital importance of keeping one's senses under strict discipline so that, freed from excessive attachment and lust, he can attain tranquillity of mind. One should suppress anger and allied emotions for achieving this objective. Without mind control there can be neither intelligence nor power of concentration nor peace nor happiness. A mind without discipline blurs the understanding and wanders aimlessly.

**Even God Has To Work** *III(19)*

tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ
kāryaṁ karma samācara
asakto hy ācaran karma
param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ

So, constantly do your tasks without attachment. For, man verily reaches the Supreme by performing action in a detached manner.

In this verse Krishna reiterates the importance of doing one's work without attachment. This advice is offered in the context of the fact that even great men like Janaka, the father of Sita, worked hard so that they might set a good example to the society. The Lord points out that He Himself has to work ceaselessly in order to preserve the world. Therefore, one should work unselfishly not only for one's own welfare but also that of the society.

**Rule of Righteousness** *IV (7, 8)*

Yadā-yadā hi dharmasya
glānir bhavati bhārata
abhyutthānam adharmasya
tadā 'tmānaṁ sṛjāmy aham

Whenever dharma decays and adharma wins then I reincarnate myself, O Bhārata.

paritrāṇāya sādhunāṁ
vināśāya ca duṣkrītām
dharmasaṁsthāpanārthāya
saṁbhavāmi yuge-yuge

I am born age after age for protecting the good, for destroying the wicked and for establishing the rule of righteousness.

In order to have peace of mind, we should have an optimistic outlook on life and about the future of the world. There are, of course, many discouraging facts which make it extremely difficult to be free from tension and trouble. Though science has helped to annihilate time and distance and bring the whole world into a small neighbourhood, it has also created a frightening future by developing weapons of destruction. Besides, the prospects of over-population, severe shortage of food and other essential goods, and the emergence of ruthless dictatorships in many countries—all these understandably affect our thinking and our conduct, As a result, we become pessimistic about tomorrow's world and such an attitude certainly disturbs our mind and discourages our initiative. In these situations, we need to remind ourselves of the Lord's promise that He will protect the world at the right time from destruction. These verses imply that God's grace will be available not only for maintaining peace in the world but also for helping us to lead lives free from fear and anxiety.

In this context, we may quote the following observations of Charles Lamb, which help us to avoid a gloomy outlook about the future of mankind: "You say that this world to you seems drained of its sweets. I do not know what you call sweet. Honey and the honeycomb, roses and violets, are yet in the earth. The sun and the moon yet reign in Heaven, and the lesser lights keep up their pretty twinklings. Meats and drinks, sweet sights and sweet smells, a country walk, spring and autumn, follies and repentance, quarrels and reconcilements have all a sweetness by turns. Good humour and good nature, friends at home that love you, and friends abroad that miss you—you possess all these sweet things. You may extract honey from everything." The Gita helps to generate

enthusiasm for life by reminding us of the Lord's assurance that He will save humanity from perdition.

**How To Get His Grace** *IV (10, 11)*

vītarāgabhayakrodhā
manmayā mām upāśritāḥ
bahavo jnānatapasā
pūtā madbhāvam āgatāḥ

Devoid of passion, fear and anger, and with full faith in Me, sanctified by penance in the fire of wisdom, many have entered into My Being.

ye yathā mām prapadyante
tāṁs tathai 'va bhajāmy aham
mama vartmā 'nuvartante
manusyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ

In whichever form men identify themselves with me, I fulfil their desires. O, Partha, men follow my path in all ways.

In these verses Krishna says that those who have subdued their harmful emotions and are deeply devoted to Him succeed in getting His grace. It is not necessary that He should be worshipped in any particular form. Religion in the true sense rises above all narrow creeds and sects. Differences among various religions should not obscure the fundamental fact that God is one and that He can be approached by any person with faith and sincerity.

**Self-Help Is Best** *VI(5)*

uddhared ātmanā 'tmānaṁ
nā 'tmānam avasādayet
ātmai 'va hy ātmano bandhur
ātmai 'va ripur ātmanaḥ

Let a man lift himself by his own self. Let him not depress himself. For, he is himself his friend, himself his enemy.

This verse emphasises the great importance of self-help and self-confidence. The Lord suggests that man should

develop himself by his own efforts. Let him not have a low opinion about himself.

Few people realise the tremendous things that they could achieve if only they exert themselves with determination. Leonardo da Vinci said, "O Lord, thou givest us everything at the price of an effort." No doubt, rising to the top by one's skill is not easy especially in the modern competitive world. But at the same time, it should not be difficult, provided one has the will and the determination to succeed. Again and again, the Gita stresses on the importance of faith, prayer and self-discipline and if these principles are sincerely practised, surely, one can achieve one's goal, despite defeats and disappointments which are bound to be temporary.

**Way to Mental Dicipline** *VI (10)*

yogī yuñjīta satatam
ātmānaṁ rahasi sthitaḥ
ekākī yatacittātmā
nirāsīr aparigrahaḥ

Let the yogi always concentrate his mind, living alone in solitude, and having controlled body and mind and abandoned desires and possessions.

This is also one of the most significant passages in the Gita, in which the Lord explains how we should strive for achieving mental discipline. The words of this verse are also sometimes not correctly interpreted.

For instance, Dr. Radhakrishnan gives the meaning of the word "nirāsi" as follows: "Worry about daily needs, about earning and spending money, disturbs meditation and takes us away from the life of the spirit. So we are asked to be free from desire and anxiety born of it, from greed and fear. The seeker should try to tear himself away from these psychic fetters and get detached from all distractions and prejudices. He must put away all clinging to mental preferences, vital aims, attachment to family and friends. He must expect nothing, insist on nothing."

But does the Lord really want us to forget our "vital aims" and give up our love for our family and friends? This,

surely, cannot be His intention. He only wants that our "vital aims" should be pure and should not come into conflict with our loyalty to the society and to humanity as a whole. Dr. Radhakrishnan uses too strong words in interpreting this verse. Is it right to suggest that in order to attain mental peace and the blessings of God, we should "expect nothing, insist on nothing?"

Dr. Annie Besant's translation of the above verse seems to be more realistic: "Let the yogi constantly engage himself in yoga, remaining in a secret place by himself with thought and self subdued, free from hope and greed." However, Dr. Besant's translation of the word *rahasi* as a secret place is not correct. Its right meaning is solitude. A secret place need not necessarily be a place of quiet which is what the Lord means.

Moreover, *nirasi* does not indicate freedom from hope. It refers to the absence of selfish desire. Hope refers to some favourable and positive result. Man should always hope for the best even when the outlook may not seem favourable.

Dr. Besant has translated *aparigrahaḥ* as freedom from greed. But, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, it means "free from longing for possessions." Dr. Besant's rendering seems to be more appropriate because it cannot be God's intention that we should not have a desire for possessions. He can only mean that we should not covet things which do not really belong to us nor should we resort to unethical ways in acquiring possessions.

**Neither Too Much, Nor too Little** *VI (16, 17)*

nā 'tyaśnatas tu yogo 'sti
na cai-kantam anaśnataḥ
na cā 'tisvapnaśīlasya
jāgrato nai'va cā'rjuna

Truly, yoga is not for him who eats too much or who refrains too much from eating. O Arjuna, it is not for him who sleeps in excess or sleeps little.

yuktāhāravihārasya
yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya
yoga bhavati duḥkhahā

Yoga kills all pain for him who practises moderation in food and recreation and who is regulated in his actions as well as in sleep and wakefulness.

In these verses the Lord emphasises the vital importance of avoiding excesses of all kinds so that our body will be physically fit which will have a beneficial effect on the mind.

**Way To Supreme Joy** *VI (27, 31, 35)*

praśāntamanasaṁ hy enaṁ
yoginaṁ sukham uttamaṁ
upaiti sāntarajasaṁ
brahmabhūtam akalmaṣam

Supreme joy is for that yogi whose mind remains at peace, whose passions are suppressed, who is free from sin and who has become one with Brahma.

The need for developing a calmness of mind is stressed in this verse. It also refers to the importance of controlling one's passions so that one can attain communion with God. The word *praśāntamanasam* suggests supreme bliss or happiness. Millions of people all over the world are unable to achieve such a state of mind because they have not learnt to eliminate unnecessary worries and live in tune with the spiritual forces around us.

sarvabhūtasthitaṁ yo mām
bhajaty ekatvam āsthitaḥ
sarvathā vartamāno 'pi
sa yogī mayi vartate

That yogi abides in Me, whatever be his way of living, who established in oneness worships Me, dwelling in all beings.

This verse emphasises the fact that it is man's inner life that really matters. His activities in the outside world need not be a bar to his attainment of communion with God.

asaṁśayam mahābāho
mano durnigraham calam
abhyasena tu kaunteya
vairāgyena ca gṛhyate

Without doubt, O Arjuna, the mind is restless and difficult to control. It can still be controlled by constant concentration and non-attachment.

We should firmly believe that with God's help we can have effective control both over body and mind.

As Albert E. Cliffe says: "Your sub-conscious mind produces in your daily life evidence of the thoughts you send back to it. The constant repetition of thoughts, fear, anxiety and worry will bring upon you the same thing multiplied many times over, but the constant practice of positive thinking, making affirmations hour by hour that God is now healing your fears and worries will bring magnificent results." He points out that "belief enables you to do things that were otherwise impossible, for the act of believing is the starting force which leads to accomplishment" and that "the more you believe, the more power within comes to your aid."

Therefore, when Krishna says that the mind, though restless, can be controlled by patience and practice, we have to believe Him and strive to achieve this goal by the right means, as outlined in the Gita.

**Four Kinds of Virtuous Men** *VII (16-18)*

caturvidhā bhajante mām
janāh sukṛtino 'rjuna
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī
jñānī ca bharatarṣabha

O Arjuna, four kinds of righteous men worship me; the man who is suffering, who seeks knowledge, who seeks wealth, one who is steeped in wisdom.

tesāṁ jñanī nityayukta
ekabhaktir viśiṣyate
priyo hi jnānino 'tyartham
ahaṁ sa ca mama priyaḥ

Of these, the wise man, who is in constant harmony and devoted to Me, excels. I am extremely dear to him and he to Me.

udārāḥ sarva evai 'te
jñāni tv ātmai 'va me matam
āsthitaḥ sa hi yuktātmā
mām eva 'nuttamām gatiṁ

All these are worthy but I consider the wise man to be My very self. He, steadfast in mind, is fixed on Me alone, as the supreme goal.

People who worship God do so either for getting out of distress or for seeking knowledge or for obtaining wealth. Then there are those who ask for no favours. They worship God out of sheer devotion. The Lord says that among these categories of people, those who are deeply devoted are the dearest to Him. At the same time, He confers His blessings even on others, if they approach Him with sincerity and faith. Therefore, people can always pray to God for whatever they want to achieve in the full belief that their prayers will be answered, provided, of course, they are offered in the right spirit, as indicated in the Gita.

**The Last Moments** *VIII (5, 7)*

antakāle ca mām eva
smaran muktvā kalevaram
yaḥ prayāti sa madbhāvaṁ
yāti nā 'sty atra saṁśayaḥ

Whoever, at the time of death, leaves the body remembering only Me, he attains My being. There is no doubt about it.

tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu
mām anusmara yudhya ca
mayy arpitamanobuddhir
mām evai 'syay asaṁśayaḥ

So, always think of Me only and fight. With mind and reason fixed on Me you will certainly come to Me.

The prospect of death frightens many people although it is a normal and natural event. A proper study of the Gita enables a person to understand correctly the significance of death and helps him to face it realistically. In these verses, Krishna says that if a man thinks of Him alone at the time of passing away, he will attain His being. The Lord asserts that there is no doubt about it. But the thought of God will readily come to a person in his last moments only if his mind had been regularly conditioned so as to have a strong faith in Him. Krishna explains to Arjuna the importance of remembering Him at all times so that His grace will become available at moments of difficulty and, finally, of death.

As Epictetus says: "There is but one way to tranquillity of mind and happiness. Let this therefore be always ready at hand with thee, both when thou wakest early in the morning, and when thou goest late to sleep, to account no external thing thine own, but commit all these to God."

Albert Cliffe explains how the constant thought of God helps to achieve peace of mind: "You have to get into the habit of leaving your troubles with God. The only complete and sure cure for your bad nerves, as you call them, is to relax in the hands of God and know that He is now looking after your troubles, that He is now guiding you into the quiet waters of inner peace. The most wonderful thing that ever happened to me was this: Many years ago I let go my past and let God take over my life. When I completely surrendered my life to Him, I lost my temper, my fears, my years of deadly illness and sickness. It meant facing life every hour with the truth that was in me to replace the negative thinking of a lifetime."

Cliffe points out that this practice enabled him to have close and continuous contact with God—"in the street car, the bus, my own car, my laboratory—no matter where I went I had an appointment with Him. What came of it? Peace of mind, health and spiritual prosperity."

It is therefore important that at all times (*sarveṣu kāleṣu*) we should remember Him and fight (*mām anusmara yudhya*). That is to say, in fighting our enemies like worry, anxiety, defeat and depression, we should take courage from our faith in God.

To quote Albert Cliffe again: "Peace of mind is the greatest asset we can have for happy, healthy living. This is an inner victory which only comes from knowing God ntimately".

**God For Security**

In the following verse, VIII (14) Krishna says that it is not difficult to attain Him provided one thinks of Him constantly :

ananyacetāh satatam
yo mām smārati nityaśaḥ
tasya 'ham sulabhah pārtha
nityayuktasya yoginaḥ

O Partha, I am easily approachable by the yogi who is ever steadfast and always thinks of me daily and of no one else.

The Lord reiterates the above idea in the following verse, (IX) (22), in which He says that He provides security (*yoga-kṣhemam*) to those men who sincerely worship Him alone.

ananyāś cintayanto mām
ye janāḥ paryupāsate
teṣām nityābhiyuktānam
yogakṣemam vahāmy aham

To those men who worship Me only, thinking of no one else, who are always devout, I give peace and security.

Swami Chinmayananda, in his book, *the Holy Gita*, has eloquently explained the significance of this verse as follows: "Here is a stanza which, with equal emphasis, discloses a secret by which glorious success can be assured for the spiritual as well as the material seekers. It is significant that this stanza is almost in the centre of the Gita. Those who, with a single pointed mind, thus meditate upon Him as the One and the Only Reality behind the entire universe, Krishna promises here that 'to them ever self-controlled I bring yoga and kshema', meaning more and more spiritual vigour (yoga- and the final experience of beatitude (*kshema*) which is libera tion resulting from the fulfilled yoga."

**Importance of Simple Worship :**

Many people observe costly and complicated customs, rituals and ceremonies in order to propitiate God. In doing so, however, more attention is given to outward forms and formalities than to genuine devotion. The following verse (IX, 26) says that whatever is offered to God, He accepts it if the offering is made with a pure heart.

patraṁ puṣpaṁ phalaṁ toyaṁ
yo me bhaktyā prayacchati
tad ahaṁ bhaktyupahṛtam
aśnāmi prayātatmanaḥ

Whoever offers Me with *bhakti* or devotion, a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water I accept that, given by the pure-hearted.

**Protection Even For Sinners :**

The Gita promises peace of mind even to those who have committed serious sins if only they regret, repent and reaffirm their faith in God. If such persons have resolved to forget their past and concentrate on Him, they are assured of all protection. Krishna assures Arjuna that His devotee will never suffer. These ideas are contained in the following

verses : IX 30,31

api cet sudurācāro
bhajate mām ananyabhāk
sādhur eva sa mantavyaḥ
samyag vyavasito hi saḥ

kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā
śasvacchāntiṁ nigacchati
kaunteya pratijānihi
na me bhaktaḥ pranaśyati

Even if a confirmed sinner worships Me with absolute sincerity, he will be considered as being righteous, for he has correctly resolved; soon he becomes a virtuous person and secures permanent peace. O, Kauntaya, know certainly that my devotee will never perish.

The Lord therefore advises us to fix our minds on Him, to be devoted to Him and to worship Him and thus discipline ourselves as indicated in this verse (IX, 34) :

manmanā bhava madbhakto
madyājī māṁ namaskuru
mām evai 'syasi yuktvai 'vam
ātmānam matparāyaṇaḥ

Keep your mind on Me; Worship Me; Sacrifice unto Me; Prostrate before Me. Having made yourself devoted to Me, seek Me as the Supreme goal, you will reach Me.

**Knowledge For Supreme Peace** *IV (38-40)*

na hi jnānena sadṛśāṁ
pavitram iha vidyate
tat svayaṁ yogasaṁsiddhaḥ
kālenā 'tmani vindati

Truly, in this world there is no purifier equal to wisdom. He realises it in his own heart, in due course, who excels in yoga.

sraddhāvaml labhate jñānaṁ
tatparaḥ samyatendriyaḥ
jñānam labdhva parāṁ sāntim
acirena 'dhigacchati

The man who is of firm faith and masters his senses obtains knowledge; and having got knowledge, he quickly attains Supreme Peace.

ajnāś cā śraddadhānaṣ ca
ṣamśayātmā vinaṣyati
nā 'yaṁ loko 'sti na paro
na sukhaṁ saṁśayātmanaḥ

But the man who is ignorant and lacks faith and doubts himself goes to perdition. For the doubting man has neither this world nor the next nor joy.

How a person can quickly achieve supreme peace is explained in these three verses. The Lord says that in this world there is nothing equal in purity to knowledge and that he who is perfected in yoga himself realises this fact in due course. Faith is indispensable for attaining knowledge; and, to have faith, one should discipline one's senses. On the other hand, those who have no faith in themselves and in God will find no happiness either now or hereafter.

It is significant to note that faith helps us not only to achieve our goals but also to stay young in spirit. As Dr. Frank Crane says : "Faith is the peculiar elixir of youth. Whoever has faith is young, no matter how old he is; whoever has lost faith is old, even at twenty-one."

Swami Vivekanada said that "our first duty is not to hate ourselves because to advance we must have faith in

ourselves first and then in God. He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God."

**Life-Infusing Words** (X 3-7)

The tenth chapter of the Gita contains many verses which bring out the real nature of God and indicate the ways to reach Him. The Lord finds that Arjuna begins to take greater interest in his advice and therefore He explains in detail about His origin and various manifestations. He points out that He wishes to speak to him about the supreme word out of His desire to do him good. We find that the more the Lord reveals Himself, the greater is the joy of Arjuna. He therefore requests Him to give some of his life-infusing words. The Lord agrees to oblige but He will tell only about those qualities which are dominant. Here are a few such illuminating verses :

yo mām ajam anādim ca
vetti lokamaheśwaram
asaṁūdhaḥ sa martyeṣu
sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate

He who knows Me as unborn and without beginning as the Supreme Lord of the worlds, he among men is free from delusions and is devoid of all sins.

buddhir jnānam asaṁmohah
ksamā satyaṁ damaḥ śamaḥ
sukham dukham bhavo 'bhavo
bhayaṁ cā 'bhayam eva ca

Wisdom, knowledge, passion, patience, truth, self-control, calmness, happiness, pain, birth, death, fear and fearlessness.

ahimsā samatā ṭustiṣ
tapo dānam yaśo yaśaḥ
bhavanti bhāva bhūtānāṁ
matta eva prthagvidhāh

Non-violence, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, reputation and obloquy — these various qualities of beings originate only from Me.

maharṣayaḥ sapta pūrve
catvāro manavas tathā
madbhāvā mānasā jātā
yesāṁ loka imāḥ prajāḥ

From My mind were born the seven great Rishis and the four ancient Manus; and from them have emanated all the creatures of the world.

etāṁ vibhūtiṁ yogaṁ ca
mama yo vetti tattvataḥ
so 'vikampena yogena
yujyate nā'tra samśayaḥ

He who really knows this greatness and glory of Mine is blessed with unfaltering yoga. There is no doubt about it.

The Lord further explains that He is the origin of all and that all things emanate from Him. The wise are fully aware of this fact and, therefore, their thoughts are always fixed on Him and they remain contented and happy. To such devotees He offers *buddhi yoga* or the yoga of discrimination. Out of love for them, He destroys the ignorance arising from darkness by the bright lamp of wisdom.

These teachings of the Gita should also help one to have a real appreciation of the nature of God and to have complete trust in Him. Benjamin Franklin said : "I have lived a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proof I see of this truth—that God governs the affairs of men."

Leo Tolstoy wrote : "I believe in God, whom I comprehend as spirit, as love, as the source of all. I believe that He is in Me and I in Him."

In the following two verses (X 41, 42) the Lord sums up his divine manifestations :

yad-yad vibhūtimat sattvaṁ
srīmad ūrjitam eva vā
tat-tad evā 'vagaccha tvaṁ
mama tejoṁśasambhavam

Whatever being exists as prosperous, powerful and glorious, know it has come but from a fragment of my splendour.

athavā bahunai 'tena
kim jnatena tava 'rjuna
vistabhyā 'ham idam krishnam
ekamsena sthito jagat

But, O Arjuna, of what use are all these details to you. I remain supporting the entire universe with one fragment of Myself.

In this context, Rabindranath Tagore's views on the nature of God are relevant : "I believe in a spiritual world, not as something separate from this world but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw, we must feel this truth, that we are living in God. Born in this great world, full of the mystery of the infinite, we cannot accept our existence as a momentary outburst of chance, drifting on the current of matter towards an external nowhere. We cannot look upon our lives as dreams of a dreamer who has no awakening in all time. We have a personality to which matter and force are unmeaning unless related to something infinitely personal, whose nature we have discovered, in some measure, in human love, in the greatness of the good, in the

martyrdom of heroic souls, in the ineffable beauty of nature, which can never be a physical fact nor anything but an expression of personality."

**God Is Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent** XI (37-43, 44)

In Chapter XI the Lord reveals Himself to Arjuna in divine form. Arjuna gets frightened for the time being but Krishna dispels his fear and again urges him to fight. In several verses, Arjuna praises the Lord and very vividly brings out His qualities as the omnipresent, the omniscient and the omnipotent God.

kasmāc ca te na nameran mahātman
garīyase brahmano 'py ādikartre
ananta deveśa jagannivāsa
tvam aksaram sad asad tatparaṁ yat

After pointing out that the world rejoices in His glory, that the Rakshasas fly in all directions in fear and that the hosts of Siddhas fall prostrate, Arjuna says: And, Great-souled One, why should they not bow to You, First Cause, greater than Brahma, Infinite Being, God of gods, home of the universe. You are the undying being and non-being, that which is Supreme.

tvam ādidevaḥ puruṣaḥ purānas
tvam asya viśvasya paraṁ nidhānam
vettā 'si vedyam ca parām ca dhāma
tvayā tataṁ viśvam anantarūpa

You are the Primal God (Adideva), the ancient Purusha, the Supreme abode of all that exists. You are the Knower and the Known and Supreme abode. You permeate this universe in Your vast form.

vāyur yamo 'gnir varunaḥ śāśānkaḥ
prajāpatis tvaṁ prapitāmāhās ca
namo namas te 'stu sahasrakrtvaḥ
punaś ca bhūyo 'pi namo namas te

You are Vayu, Yama, Agni, Varuna, Moon, Prajapati and the Great-grandfather. Hail to Thee, a thousand times. Hail to Thee, again and again.

namaḥ purastād atha pṛṣṭhatatas te
namo 'stu te sarvata eva sarva
anantaviryamitavikramas tvaṁ
sarvaṁ samapnoṣi tato 'si sarvaḥ

Salutation to You in front and salutation behind, salutation to You on all sides, O All; Boundless in power and matchless in strength. You pervade everything and so You are all.

pitā si lokasya carācarasya
tvam asya pūjyas ca gurur garīyān
na tvatsamo 'sty abhyadhikaḥ kuto 'nyo
lokatraye 'py apratimaprabhāva

You are the Father of this world, of all that is moving and unmoving. You are the greatest of all Gurus. In all the three worlds, there is none equal to You. Who then is Superior to You?

tasmāt pranamya pranidhāya kāyaṁ
prasādaye tvām aham īsam īdyam
pite 'va putrasya sakhe 'va sakhyuḥ
priyah priyāya 'rhasi deva sodhum

Therefore, prostrating before you, bear with me O God, as father with son, as friend with friend, and as lover with his beloved.

Arjuna says in the above verses that the world is delighted in extolling His virtues. He considers the Lord as even greater than Brahma, the original creator. He describes Him as

*ananta* (Infinite Being), *devesa* (Lord of the gods) and *jagannivāsa* (refuge of the universe). He refers to His infinite might, immeasurable vigour and universal presence. Therefore, Arjuna prostrates before Him and asks for forgiveness. The importance of these verses lies in the fact that we should regard God not as some mysterious force but as some one very close to us and to whom we can look up for guidance and inspiration in spiritual matters as well as in our personal affairs.

**Resentment and Hatred Will Destroy Peace of Mind**

When Krishna again appears in His peaceful human form, Arjuna regains his composure. The Lord then tells him that He could be seen in the Isvara form neither through the Vedas nor by practising austerity but only by constant and sincere devotion. Krishna reiterates the need for *bhakti* and assures that whosoever works for Him and worships Him, free from all attachment and from enmity to all beings, goes to Him. This idea is contained in the following two verses (XI 54, 55):

bhaktyā tv ananyayā śakya
aham evamvidho 'rjuna
jnātuṁ draṣṭum ca-t-attvena
praveṣṭum ca paraṁtapa

But, O Parantapa, I may be thus known and seen actually and also entered into only by sincere devotion.

matkarmakrn matparamo
madbhaktaḥ sangavarjitaḥ
nirvairaḥ sarvabhūteṣu
yaḥ sa mām eti pāndava

He who works for Me, who considers Me as the Supreme, who is devoted to Me, who is free from attachment and hatred of anyone, he comes to Me, O Pandava.

These verses represent the quintessence of the Gita. They emphasise the importance of action, worship, freedom from attachment and also the absence of hatred towards anyone.

Commentators on the Gita have not laid adequate stress on Krishna's insistence on the need for avoiding hatred of others. It is essential not to entertain thoughts of resentment and hatred because they not only disturb the peace of mind but also affect our physical health. This idea also occurs in Chapter XII, 13, 14 :

advestā sarvabhūtānāṁ
maitraḥ karuna eva ca
nirmamo nirahaṁkāraḥ
samaduḥkhasukhaḥ kśami
saṁtuṣṭaḥ satataṁ yogī
yatātmā drdhaniścayaḥ
mayy arpitamanobuddhir
yo madbhaktaḥ sa me priyaḥ

He, who dislikes no one, who is friendly and kind to all, who has no feelings of "I and mine", who remains unaffected by pain and pleasure and is forgiving; who is always content, steady in worship, self-disciplined and of strong conviction, with mind and intellect concentrated on Me, such a devotee is dear to Me.

These verses emphasise the virtues that a real devotee should develop. It is not enough if one refrains from disliking others. It is equally important to adopt a positive approach to all, irrespective of our differences with them. This was the attitude that Mahatma Gandhi followed both in his personal and political career. Though he detested the British rule, he did not hate the British people. This enhanced his prestige throughout the world, and the people of Britain also developed a deep and sincere affection for him. Gandhiji wanted to spiritualise political life so that those who took active part in politics could maintain their love and respect for one another even despite major differences.

It is interesting to see that the Bible also has underlined the need for loving our fellow-men including those who may not be favourably inclined to us. The Bible says: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that

hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Norman Vincent Peale points out that resentment is a big stumbling block to the achievement of peace of mind. Referring to the significance of the above passage, Peale says in his book, *Inspiring Messages For Daily Living*, as follows : "Make a list of all the people who have hurt and mistreated you or whom you do not like. Then pray for each by name and sincerely practise forgiving each one. Ask the Lord to bless them. Tell the Lord that you want to mean this. Repel the thought that after all you 'are justified' in your resentment. Then speak kindly about these persons to others. Go out of your way to help them. This will in time break down many barriers, but even if it shouldn't, the effect upon you will be amazing. It will clear the channel through which spiritual power flows into you."

Another passage in the Bible says: "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any." Commenting on this, Peale says that "spiritual power cannot pass through a personality where resentment exists" and that "hate is a non-conductor of spiritual energy." He has suggested that every time we pray, we should add this phrase: "Lord, take from my thought ill-will, grudges, hates and jealousies."

It may not be possible for us to go as far as Peale in making a list of the people whom we do not like and pray for them. But it is clearly in our interest to control effectively our feelings of hatred and resentment and do not allow them to dominate our thoughts to such an extent as to produce an adverse impact on our mind and body.

We should also remember that we cannot love others sincerely unless we love ourselves. In other words, we should have a reasonably good opinion about our own ability and attainments and avoid all feelings of inferiority complex. There is a tendency among many people to deprecate themselves and to underestimate their own capacity with the result that they are unable to make full use of their talent. Such people obviously cannot love others.

According to Dr. Alexander Rein Martin, a famous psychiatrist of USA, "case after case shows a lack of self-love at the root of mental illness. If people had a healthy love of themselves instead of carrying hidden burdens of self-contempt, our pshychiatric case load would be cut in half."

Dr. Robert H. Felix, a former Director of the National Institute of Mental Health in Washington D.C. has suggested that one should have a "feeling of dignity, of belonging, of worthwhileness, a feeling of adequacy—yet a healthy sense of humility." This is also the teaching of the Gita as indicated in the above verses.

**Triple Gate of Hell** : XVI (21, 22) :

Krishna repeatedly condemns such evils as lust, anger and greed, and warns that one should abandon them in order to attain peace and prosperity. It is, of course, legitimate to acquire wealth but it should not lead to pride and arrogance. Nor should wealth be used for vulgar display or for sensual enjoyment. Wealth should be utilised for the benefit of the society. In the following two verses, Krishna says that the soul will be ruined if we do not control our greed, wrath and selfish desire. He describes them as constituting the "triple gate of hell."

trividhaṁ narakasye 'daṁ
dvāraṁ nāśanam ātmanaḥ
kāmaḥ krodhas tathā lobhas
tasmād etat trayam tyajet

etair vimuktaḥ kaunteya
tamodvārais tribhir naraḥ
ācaraty ātmanah śreyas
tato yāti parāṁ gatiṁ

Lust, greed and anger constitute the triple gate of hell damaging to the self: therefore one should shun them. O, son of Kunti, one who is freed from these three gateways to darkness, does what is good for him and thus attains the highest goal.

**Austerity of Speech :** XVII (15, 16)

The Gita gives sound advice as to how one should conduct oneself in speaking. Dealing with the "penance of mind" in Chapter XVII, the Lord refers to the need for avoiding in one's speech all excitement and to speak only whatever is truthful, pleasant, clear and beneficial. The practice of reciting the sacred texts is also recommended as a method to achieve balanced mind. These ideas are expressed in the following two verses :

anudvegakaraṁ vākyam
satyaṁ priyahitam ca yat
svādhyāyabhyasanaṁ cai 'va
vāngmayaṁ tapa ucyate

The speech which does not hurt, which is truthful, pleasant and positive and also the recitation of the scriptures — these form the austerity of speech.

manaḥprasādah saumyatvaṁ
maunam ātmavinigraḥ
bhavāsamśuddhir ity etat
tapo mānasam ucyate

Happiness of mind, equanimity, silence, self-control and purity of nature constitute austerity of mind.

The advice to eschew anger and annoyance in one's speech is of great importance in developing a positive attitude of mind and in maintaining cordial relations with others. Most people lose their temper even on trifling matters and say harsh and unpleasant words which they regret later. The cultivation of the habit of speaking politely is particularly important in dealing with children, aged persons, the poor and those who have gone astray. The following poem by Lewis J. Bates beautifully brings out these ideas :

Speak gently: it is better far
To rule by love than fear;
Speak gently: let not harsh words mar
The good we might do here.

Speak gently: love doth whisper low
The vows that true hearts bind;
And gently friendship's accents flow;
Affection's voice is kind.
Speak gently to the little child;
Its love be sure to gain;
Teach it in accents soft and mild;
It may not long remain.
Speak gently to the aged one;
Grieve not the careworn heart;
The sands of life are nearly run,
Let such in peace depart.
Speak gently to the young; for they
Will have enough to hear;
Pass through this life as best as they may,
'Tis full of anxious care.
Speak gently, kindly to the poor;
Let no harsh tones be heard:
They have enough they must endure,
Without an unkind word.
Speak gently to the erring; know
They may have toiled in vain:
Perchance unkindness made them so;
Oh, win them back again.
Speak gently: He who gave his life
To bend man's stubborn will,
When elements were in fierce strife,
Said to them, "Peace be still."
Speak gently; 'tis a little thing,
Dropp'd in the heart's deep well;
The good, the joy, which it may bring
Eternity shall tell.

**Three Kinds of Gifts** : XVII (20, 21, 22)

Another important technique for developing peace of mind is to give away one's wealth for the benefit of others. But this should be done in utter sincerity. The Gita speaks

of three kinds of gifts in the following verses :

dātavyam iti yad dānam
dīyate 'nupakāriṇe
de'śe kāle ca pātre ca
tad dānam sattvikaṁ smṛtam

That gift known as *sattvika* which is offered to one who cannot reciprocate, with the awareness that it is one's duty to give and which is given at the right time, to the right person and at the right place.

yat tu pratyupakārārthaṁ
phalam uddiśya vā punaḥ
dīyate ca parikliṣṭam
tad dānam rājasaṁ smṛtan

That gift is called *rajasika* which is given in expectation of a return or which is given reluctantly, or which is given with a motive.

adesakāle yad dānam
apratabhyas ca dīyate
asatkratam avajñātam
tat tāmasam udhāhṛṭam

That gift is in the category of *tamasika,* which is offered to an undeserving person or at a wrong place or time without due respect or with humiliating conditions.

Andrew Carnegie has said that "the secret of happiness is renunciation." He was a man of stupendous achievements. Not only he became a multimillionaire but he also inspired many people to build up huge fortunes. Carnegie gave generously for many noble causes and by sharing his wealth in this manner, he demonstrated to the world that happiness would come to a person only when he enjoyed it with others.

The Gita tells us to shun happiness which arises from sloth, sleep and neglect. The attainment of happiness in the real sense may call for restraint and renunciation and the development of character, but it is indeed worth striving for.

**How To Overcome Obstacles** : XVIII (56, 57, 58)

In the following verses the Lord again advises Arjuna to take courage and to fight, in the firm assurance that His grace will always be available to him to overcome all obstacles.

sarvakarmāny api sadā
kurvano madvyapāsrayaḥ
matprasādād avapnoti
sāsvataṁ padam avyayam

Performing always all actions, seeking refuge in Me, by My grace, he reaches the eternal deathless abode.

cetasā sarvakarmāṇi
mayi saṁnyasya matparaḥ
buddhiyogaṁ upāśritya
maccittaḥ satataṁ bhava

Mentally surrendering all deeds to Me, keeping Me as the highest goal, practising the yoga of discrimination, do you always fix your thought on Me.

maccittāḥ sarvadurgāṇi
matprasādāt tarisyasi
atha cet tvam ahaṁkarān
na śroṣyasi vinankṣyasi

By concentrating on Me and by My grace, you can overcome all impediments. But if due to egoism, you do not heed Me, you will perish.

Whatever may be the nature of the obstacles that we may have to face in our life, we are assured that we can surmount them with His blessings. The history of the world is replete with instances of men and women having achieved their goals entirely by their determination and their belief in God. Even persons who are severely handicapped physically have been able to do amazing feats by sheer will power. Here is one such example, as reported in the *Statesman* of the 13th August

1979 :

"A legless man succeeded in swimming a 10 km. strait in three hours 25 minutes today, less than the time it often takes a normal swimmer. Mr. Kenzo Fujitoki, 40, of Tokyo, swam to the shore at Atami, some 120 km. south-west of Tokyo from Hatsushima island, 10 km. off Atami. Thanks to moderate seas and a wind from behind, Mr. Fujitoki was able to swim the current and made the crossing in half the time he had anticipated.

He said that the purpose of his swim was to show his children and other young people that even a handicapped person can succeed if he tries hard.

A former construction worker, Mr. Fujitoki lost both legs in an accident eight years ago. He began swimming seriously as a part of his rehabilitation therapy and in 1974 he won the gold medal in a 50-metre swimming race for physically handicapped persons in London."

The Bible also contains many inspiring messages which have helped people to hurl their obstacles aside and achieve their ambitions. Examples of such sentences are the following :

"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

"If God be for us, who can be against us?"

"Be strong and of a good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed. For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

"The kingdom of God is within you."

**Happiness of Three Kinds** : XVIII (37, 38, 39)

How to achieve happiness is the aim of every individual. But what exactly constitutes happiness will depend on one's

outlook on life. The Gita refers to happiness of three kinds, arising from *sattvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika*. These are described in the following verses :

yat tad agrè viṣaṁ iva
parināme 'mrtopamam
tat sukhaṁ sāttvikaṁ proktam
ātma buddhiprasādajam

That happiness is said to be pure, arising from the full knowledge of the self, which at first is like poison but in the end is sweeter.

viṣayendriyasaṁyogād
yat tad agre 'mrtopamam
pariṇame viṣam iva
tat sukhaṁ rājasaṁ smṛtam

That happiness is said to be passionate, which comes from contact of the senses and their objects, which is like nectar at first but at the end is like poison.

yad agre cā 'nubandhe ca
sukhaṁ mohanam ātmanaḥ
nidrālasya pramādotthaṁ
tat tāmasam udāhṛtam

Such happiness which comes from sleep, sloth and carelessness and which deludes the self at first and at last is considered dark.

In other chapters also, we find the Lord's views on the attainment of happiness. Here are three verses from Chapter V (23, 24, 25) on this subject.

śaknotī 'hai'va yah soḍhuṁ
prāk sarīravimoksanāt
kāmakrodhodbhavaṁ vegaṁ
sa yuktaḥ sa sukhī naraḥ

He who is able to control desire and anger even in this world he is a Yogi; a happy man.

yo 'ntaḥsukho 'ntārāramas
tathā 'ntarjyotir eva yaḥ
sa yogī brahmanirvānaṁ
brahmabhūto 'dhigacchati

He attains *moksha* or absolute freedom and becomes Brahman, who rejoices within, who is happy within and whose illumination is within.

labhante brahmanirvānaṁ
ṛṣayah kṣīnakalmaṣāh
chinnadvaidhā yatātmanaḥ
sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ

With sins removed, doubts destroyed, minds controlled, rejoicing in the welfare of all, the Rishis obtain eternal peace.

Krishna points out in the above verses that happiness can be attained by a person even in this world, before he gives up his body, if he resists selfish desires and abandons anger. The fact is emphasised that true happiness comes from within and whoever is able to realise this achieves *brahmanirvānam* or the beatitude of Brahman.

Happiness also comes to those who delight in doing good to others. It was in this way that the Rishis, having destroyed their sins, and controlled their senses, obtained perpetual peace. All religions as well as great thinkers at all times have stressed on the importance of utilising one's time and talents for uplifting the poor and the down-trodden.

Thomas Carlyle wrote: "It is great, and there is no other greatness, to make one nook of God's creation more fruitful, better, more worthy of God, to make some human heart a little wiser, manlier, happier—more blessed."

Albert Schweitzer, one of the most dynamic and devoted social workers of modern times, writes as follows as to how one may do good to those who are in need of assistance: "Open your eyes and look for some man, or some work for the sake of men, which needs a little time, a little friendship, a

little sympathy, a little human toil. Perhaps, it is a lonely person, or an invalid or some unfortunate inefficient, to whom you can be something. It may be an old man or it may be a child. Or, some good work is in want of volunteers who will devote a free evening to it or will run on errands for it. Who can reckon up all the ways in which that priceless fund of impulse, man, is capable of exploitation? He is needed in every nook and corner. Therefore, search and see if there is not some place where you may invest your humanity. Do not be put off if you have to wait and to experiment. Be sure that you will have disappointments to endure. But do not be satisfied without some side line in which you may give yourself out as a man to men. There is one waiting for you if only you are willing to take it up in the right spirit."

The attainment of real happiness depends mainly on one's mental attitude towards the problems of life as they arise. Many scholarly books and essays have appeared on the various aspects of happiness and the authors, of course, differ on their definition. But they seem agreed on certain fundamental facts regarding the nature of happiness. For example, whether one achieves the happiness or not will depend entirely on what constitutes one's goal in life and how far one is able to achieve it. Augustine of Hippo has said that "happiness consists in the attainment of our desire, in our having only right desires." Marcus Aurelius has observed that "no man is happy who does not think himself so."

Wealth is generally supposed to bring happiness to those who possess it. But the mere acquisition of it does not always bring joy and peace of mind. On the other hand, there have been numerous examples of joy eluding wealthy persons. As Jawaharlal Nehru has said: "Happiness, after all, is an inner state of mind. it is little dependent on outside environment. Happiness has very little to do, for instance, with whether you are rich or not rich. Some of the most miserable persons I have come across in my life are the rich people. It is true that poverty makes one miserable in a very acute way. But my point is that it is not wealth but coordination of one's thought and action which removes inner conflicts. It is in that way that integration of personality is achieved,"

Some people go to the extent of saying that love of wealth is to be avoided because it cannot bring happiness. But, surely, there is nothing wrong in acquiring wealth by hard and honest work. What is essential is that such wealth should be used not merely for promoting one's own good or that of one's family but for the benefit of society. As Lord Byron has said: "All who would win joy, must share it. Happiness was born a twin."

śraddhāvān anasūyaś ca
śrnuyād api yo naraḥ
so 'pi muktah subhām lokān
prāpnuyāt punyakarmaṇām

That man also, who full of faith, merely listens to it without scoffing, even he, freed from evil, gets into the world of righteous deeds.

It is significant that the Lord has again stressed on the need to develop full faith in Him. He asks Arjuna whether he has listened to Him with concentration and his ignorance has been removed. Arjuna replies that by His grace, his scepticism has disappeared and that he has regained his composure.

There is no doubt that whoever follows the teachings of the Gita with confidence and conviction will be able to achieve peace of mind which is an essential prerequisite for successful living as well as for all great achievements.

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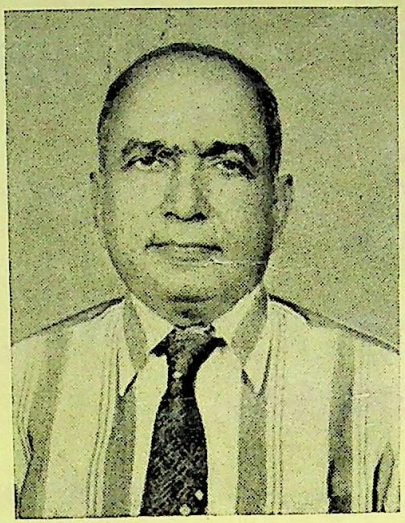

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shri R. J. Venkateswaran was educated in Victoria College, Palghat, and Presidency College, Madras. After taking M.A. degree with a first class in History and Economics in 1943, he worked as a college lecturer for five years. He then joined the *Eastern Economist,* New Delhi, as an Assistant Editor. Later, he joined the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta, as a Senior Executive.

Shri Venkateswaran has been a frequent contributor to leading newspapers and periodicals in India and abroad. His articles have appeared in the *Times,* London, the *Financial Times,* London, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review.*

Shri Venkateswaran's book, *Cabinet Government In India,* was published in London by George Allen and Unwin.

Shri Venkateswaran has been a keen student of the *Gita.* In this book, he has shown a new approach to the study of the *Gita* specifically from the point of view of achieving peace of mind. The author explains how the teachings of the *Gita* can be effectively used for avoiding such emotions as disturb mental peace and for developing those powerful attitudes which help to promote our real happiness.